PCGAMES

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SPECIAL HD & CD ISSUE!

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MAGIC CARPET

Bullfrog's latest stroke of pure genie-us reviewed!

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December 1994
All aboard for the ride of your life!
5

NO DISK? ASK YOUR NEWSAGENT!

NO CD? ASK YOUR NEWSAGENT!

LITTLE BIG ADVENTURE

It may be small — but it's perfectly formed! Full review inside...

DID DO IT AGAIN!

The creators of Inferno unveil their latest masterwork...

REVIEWED! Transport Tycoon ● Lode Runner ● Dream Web ● Quarantine ● Space Simulator ● Lords Of The Realm ● Alien Legacy ● And more!

PREVIEWED! LoadStar ● Cadillacs & Dinosaurs!

TIPPED! Doom 2 ● Colonization ● Desert Strike!

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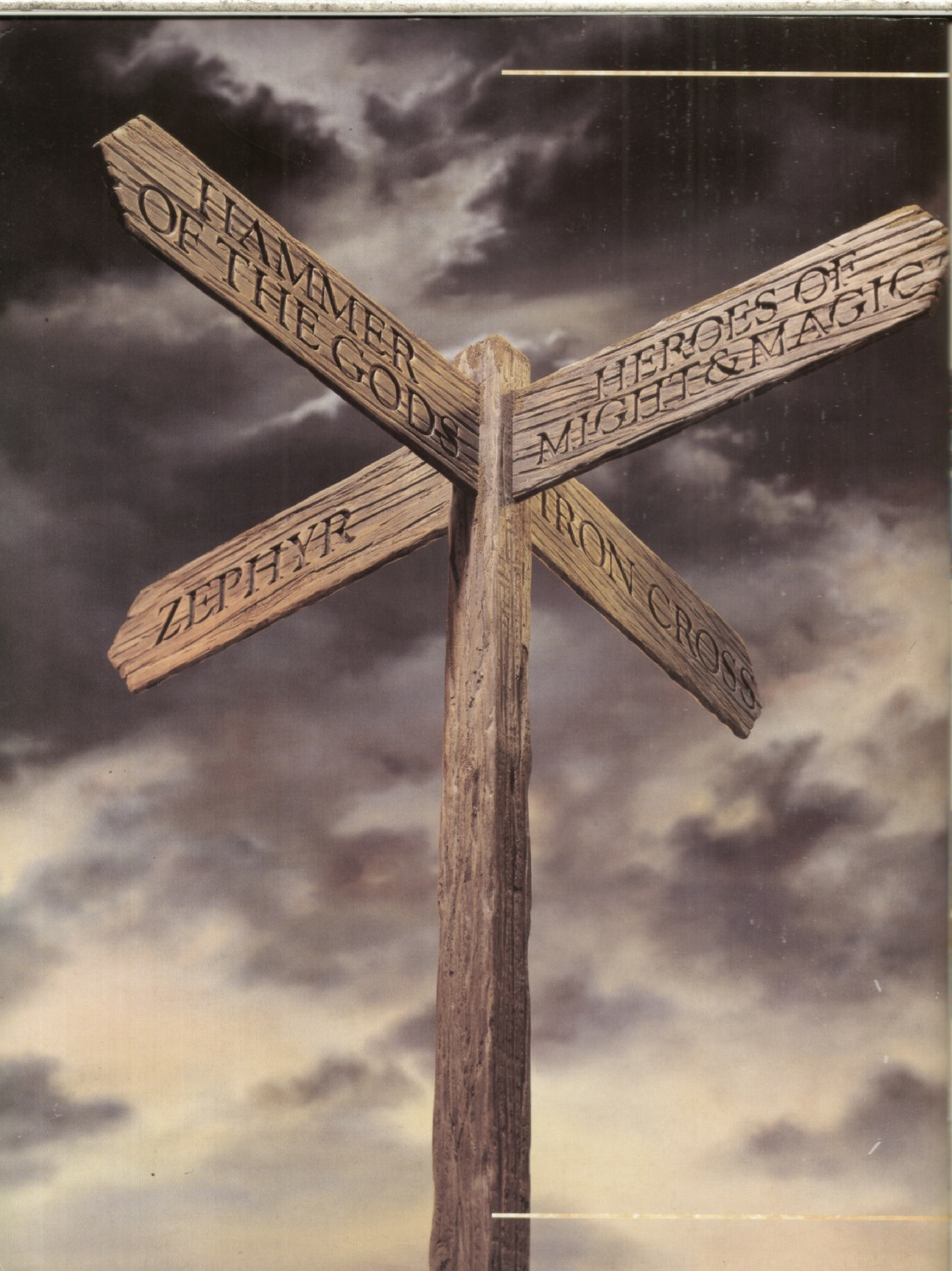
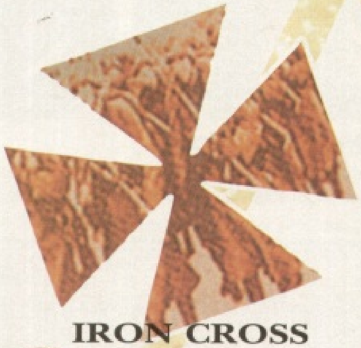
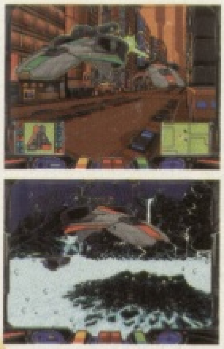

HAMMER OF THE GODS
HEROES OF MIGHT & MAGIC
ZEPHYR
IRON CROSS



IRON CROSS

*R*e-create the pivotal battles of World War II, from the Battle of the Bulge to Hitler's Bunker. Command either the Axis or Allied troops and test your skills and tactics against the computer in this challenging game.

• IBM 386 or greater • Double speed CD-ROM drive • SVGA monitor • 4Mb RAM • MS DOS 5.0 or greater

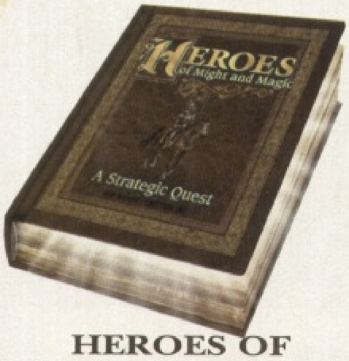


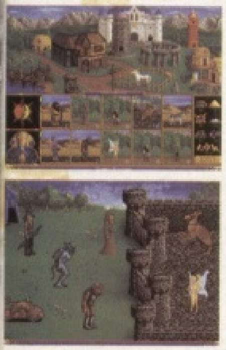
ZEPHYR

*T*ake command of the Zephyr hovertank. In the year 2365 you'll need the most sophisticated weapon system ever assembled to take on your opponents, in the wildest, most intense combat experience on PC.

• IBM 386 or greater • Double speed CD-ROM drive • VGA monitor • 4Mb RAM • MS DOS 5.0 or greater • VR headset and Cybermen mouse supported

WORLD OF ADVENTURE





HEROES OF MIGHT AND MAGIC

*F*antasy fanatics have had the gauntlet thrown down to conquer the world. Take on three computer-controlled devious warlords, manage your resources and win the Artifact of the Ancients.

• IBM 386 or greater • Hard drive • VGA monitor • 4Mb RAM • Mouse

QUEST COMPLETED!

HAMMER OF THE GODS

*E*xplore, raid, pillage and plunder as you carve out your empire. Through cunning exploits, heroic deeds and sheer courage, the surviving hero will win the right to become "Hammer of the Gods". If you are up to the challenge your position beside Odin awaits!

• IBM 386 or greater • CD-ROM drive • VGA monitor • 4Mb RAM • MS DOS 5.0 or greater

U.S.GOLD

NEW WORLD COMPUTING®

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By now, you've probably noticed that large shiny thing attached to the front cover — it's called a CD, the acronym for 'Compact Disc'. CD could also be an acronym for 'Cracking Demos', which would be quite apt as that's what you'll find on it. We hope you enjoy them...

If any proof were needed that CD-ROM is the future of PC gaming, you need only look at games like Bullfrog's Magic Carpet and EA's Little Big Adventure, both of which are reviewed this issue. Believe me, they're *extraordinarily* good.

But that's not to say there's no life left in floppy games. Take MicroProse's Transport Tycoon, for example — a wonderful game that's arguably far superior to Sim City 2000 but which comes on just two HD disks. *Amazing.* This, too, is reviewed this very issue.

What all these excellent titles show is that you can forget the so-called 'Super Consoles', because the PC is *the* games machine of the future. And, remember, we'll always be here to cover its inevitable rise to the top. Stay tuned.

David Upchurch,
Editor.

6 Disks!

You may have noticed that there's a CD and a HD limply attached to the cover of this magazine. If you spotted that, well done — now turn to this page to find out what they do. If not, shame on you.

16 News

Only the hottest news is good enough for the Captain's table — and news doesn't get much hotter than this, so the Captain should be well pleased.

26 The Next Big Thing?

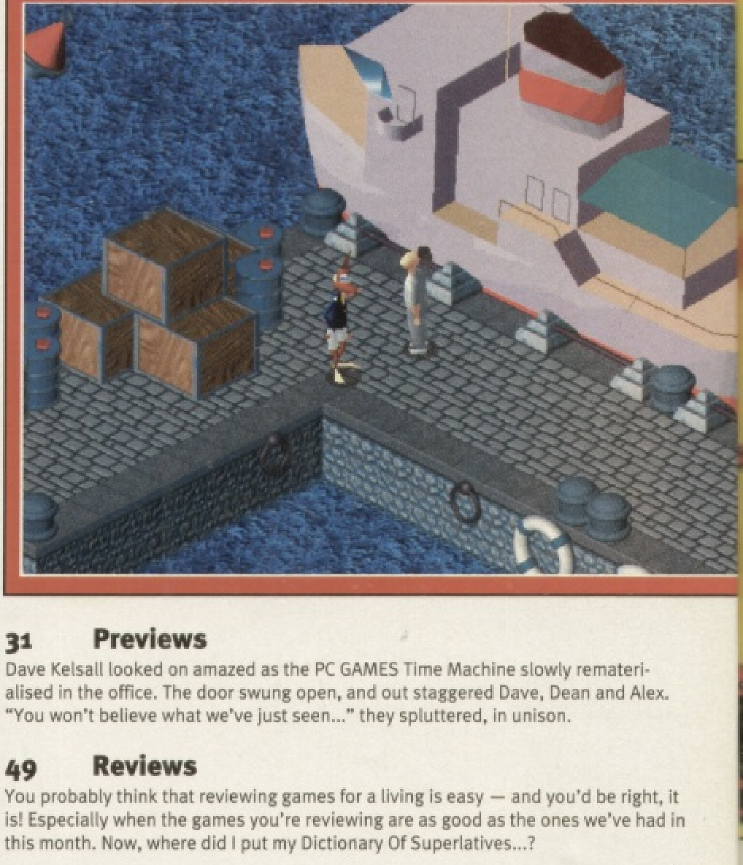
More and more games these days offer SVGA support... But is this *really* the way forward? And what does it all mean for the average gamesplayer? We investigate...

What DID *did* next!

Inferno was tops, but you ain't seen nothing yet! Turn to page 42 to find out more...

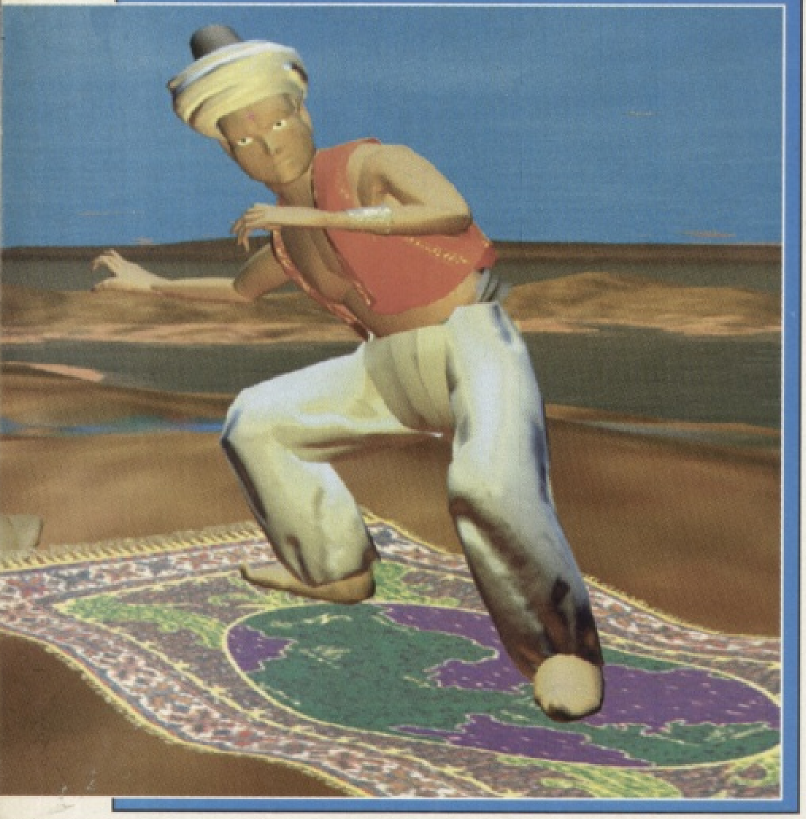
Little Big Adventure..............56

The arcade adventure comes of age with Little Big Adventure, a super-cute romp featuring tiny, Gouraud-shaded 3D sprites and detailed SVGA backdrops. Like, as they say, wow...



Magic Carpet............................50

The Bullfrogs do the Shake 'n' Vac and put the freshness back into the PC games market with their most incredible game yet — indeed, it could easily be the Game Of The Year...



31 Previews

Dave Kelsall looked on amazed as the PC GAMES Time Machine slowly rematerialised in the office. The door swung open, and out staggered Dave, Dean and Alex. "You won't believe what we've just seen..." they spluttered, in unison.

49 Reviews

You probably think that reviewing games for a living is easy — and you'd be right, it is! Especially when the games you're reviewing are as good as the ones we've had in this month. Now, where did I put my Dictionary Of Superlatives...?

88 CD Updates

Alone In The Dark 2, Desert Strike and Ultimate Domain (AKA Genesia) are the three games that have been given a shiny new suit and offered up for review this month.

90 Budget Reviews

You don't have to be as rich as Croesus to play top PC games — as this section more than adequately shows.

Editor David Upchurch ● *Assistant Editor* Dean Evans ● *Staff Writer* Alex Fraser ● *Art Editor* David Kelsall ● *Additional Design* Niki Creed, Colin Parker ● *Cover Illustration* Paul McLaughlin from out of Bullfrog — thanks a million, Paul ● *Contributors* Simon Byron, Christina Erskine, Paul Glancey, Cat Jones ● *Internal Illustrations* Paul Garner , Rachel Trewin ● *Advertising Manager* Marie Lawlor ● *Advertising Production* Tina Gynn ● *Editorial Director* David Kelly ● *Managing Director* Terry Pratt ● *Editorial and Advertising Offices* Priory Court, 30-32 Farringdon Lane, London EC1R 3AU; Tel: (071) 972 6700, Fax: (071) 972 6710 ● *Distribution* Frontline Ltd, Park Road, Peterborough PE1 2TR; Tel: (0733) 555161 ● PC GAMES is produced with the help and assistance of Apple Macintosh Desktop Publishing equipment, using Quark Xpress 3.11, Adobe Photoshop 2.5, Aldus Freehand 4 and a host of others. Printed by TPL, 111 Hartlebury Trading Estate, Hartlebury, Nr Kidderminster, Worcs DY10 4JB ● *MonitorMan™ Logo* The Designers Republic ●
No part of this magazine may be reproduced, stored in a data retrieval system or transmitted by any means, electronic, mechanical, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of the publisher ● Cryptic quote: "Cheer up. Cheeeeer Up. Chirrup..." ● © EMAP Images 1994

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How using Windows can change your life — for both good and bad.

112 Next Month!
What? A whole spread? Yes, there's an extra big Next Month page this issue, because we've got some extra big news for you!

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REVIEWED THIS ***ISSUE...***

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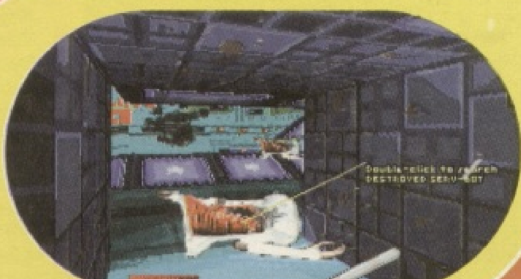
Disks!

We've gone all multimedia this issue, and offer for your delectation not just a demo-packed HD disk, but a fun-filled CD too! You lucky, lucky people...

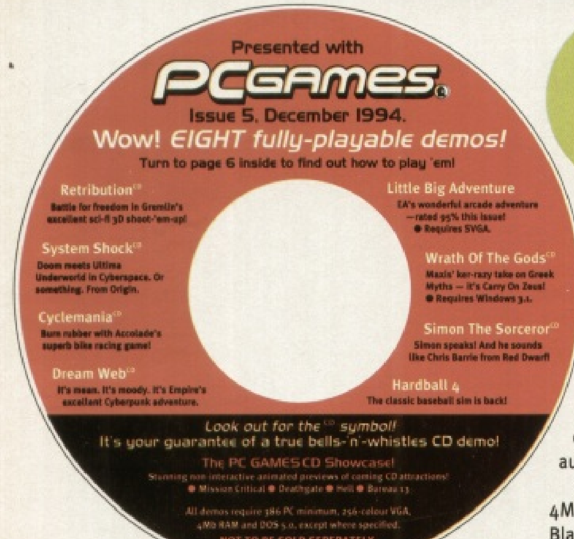


Disks!

Yes! we've finally done it. At long last, the mighty PC GAMES has entered the multimedia age and come up with the greatest collection of CD and floppy game demos you have ever seen. Forget the rest and... erm... I can't remember the rest of it.

How to Use Your HD and CD Coverdisks!

- If you want to get at the goodies on the High-Density disk, turn to page 11 NOW for full instructions!
- If you want to get at the goodies on the CD-ROM disc, read the 'Loading The Game...' section in the instructions for each demo.



Presented with
PC GAMES
Issue 5, December 1994.
Wow! EIGHT fully-playable demos!
Turn to page 6 inside to find out how to play 'em!

RetributionCD
Battle for freedom in Gremlin's excellent sci-fi 3D shoot-'em-up!

System ShockCD
Doom meets Ultima Underworld in Cyberspace. Or something. From Origin.

CyclemaniaCD
Burn rubber with Accolade's superb bike racing game!

Dream WebCD
It's mean. It's moody. It's Empire's excellant Cyberpunk adventure.

Little Big Adventure
EA's wonderful arcade adventure —rated 95% this issue!
● Requires SVGA.

Wrath Of The GodsCD
Maxis' ker-razy take on Greek Myths — it's Carry On Zeus!
● Requires Windows 3.1.

Simon The SorcerorCD
Simon speaks! And he sounds like Chris Barrie from Red Dwarf!

Hardball 4
The classic baseball sim is back!

Look out for the CD symbol!
It's your guarantee of a true bells-'n'-whistles CD demo!

The PC GAMES CD Showcase!
Stunning non-interactive animated previews of coming CD attractions!
● Mission Critical ● Deathgate ● Hell ● Bureau 13

All demos require 386 PC minimum, 256-colour VGA, 4Mb RAM and DOS 5.0, except where specified.
NOT TO BE SOLD SEPERATELY.

Retribution

Gremlin Interactive

Ten years in, and the company that brought you Monty Mole and Zool have gone for a complete change of image. Out goes the rainbow lozenge and the outdated 'Gremlin Graphics' monicker, and in comes Gremlin Interactive and a bright new future.

Retribution is the first project to come from the spanking new company, and we at PC GAMES thought it looked so good, we couldn't resist the chance to bring you the earliest look possible at this superb 3D blast.

Loading The Game...

Log onto your CD-ROM drive (i.e. D: or E:) and then type

CD RETDEMO

to go into the Retribution directory. There you will find two versions of the Retribution demo; one for machines with 8Mb of RAM and one for machines with 4Mb of RAM. Both versions of the game are identical, with the exception that the 4Mb version runs without background music.

To run the 4Mb version without sound, type

RET4

at the MS-DOS prompt.

Alternatively, to run the 8Mb version without sound, type

RET8

at the prompt.

Control options are selected at the command line stage, by adding **MOUSE**, **KEYBOARD** or **JOYSTICK** to the **RET4/8** command. Mouse is default, so typing

RET8 MOUSE

is the same as typing

RET8

To select your soundcard you need to add a further extension to the **RET4** or to the **RET8** command, using **SB8** for an 8-bit Sound Blaster card (or 100% compatible) or **SB16** for a 16-bit Sound Blaster card (or 100% compatible).

After that you need to define the location of your card with **SBPORT=**, **SBIRQ=** and **SBDMA=**, or you can just use the **SBAUTO** instruction to autodetect the card.

So, for example, if you're running the demo on a 4Mb PC, using a joystick, and have an 8-bit Sound Blaster soundcard which is using Port 220, IRQ 7 and DMA 1, type:

RET4 JOYSTICK SB8 SBPORT=220 SBIRQ=7 SBDMA=1

On the 8Mb version of the demo you can also play music through Sound Blaster 16's MIDI port address with the **SB16MIDI=** instruction.

So, to run the 8Mb version of the demo, using the keyboard and a Sound Blaster 16 card with the music enabled, you would type:

RET8 KEYBOARD SB16 SBPORT=220 SBIRQ=7 SBDMA=1 SB16MIDI=330

(Remembering to substitute the values for the ones for your card)

Game Controls

Although the game might look a little daunting at first, you'll actually find it's a doddle to play.

Speed	Use keys 1-9 to adjust speed, or use the + and — keys for fine tuning.
Afterburners	TAB
Target vehicle	T
Lock-on target vehicle	L
Rocket/missile select	ENTER
Release chaff	C
Use special weapon	CTRL
Pick up object	P
Drop object	D
Map	M
Views from fighter	F1, F2, F3, F4
Mouse/joystick menu	F8
Detail level menu	F10
Pause	BACKSPACE
Quit Mission	ESCape

Keyboard-Only Controls

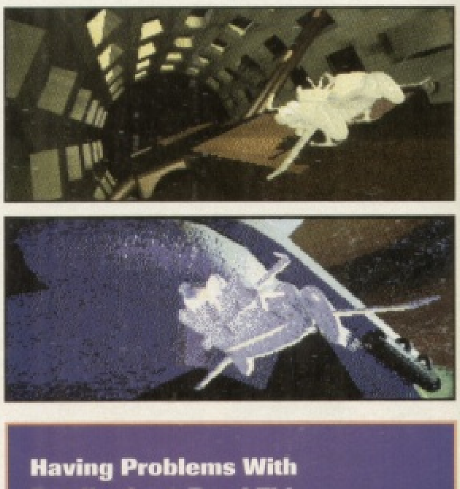
Steering	Using keypad or cursor keys
Laser fire	SPACE
Rocket/missile fire	Left ALT

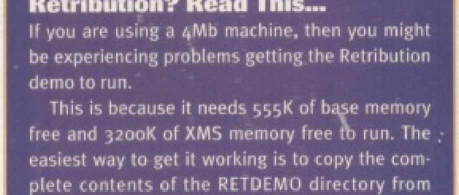
Mouse/Joystick Controls

Steering	Move up, down, left, right
Laser Fire	Left button/Button 1
Rocket/missile	Right button/Button 2

Alternatively...

Steering	Move up, down, left, right
Laser fire	Left button/Button 1
Rocket/missile fire	Both buttons
Speed up	Forward and right button/Button 2
Slow down	Backward and right button/Button 2





Having Problems With Retribution? Read This...

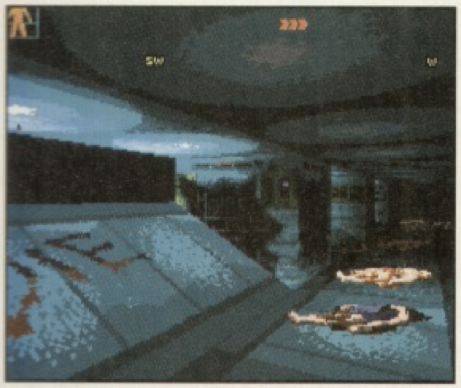
If you are using a 4Mb machine, then you might be experiencing problems getting the Retribution demo to run.

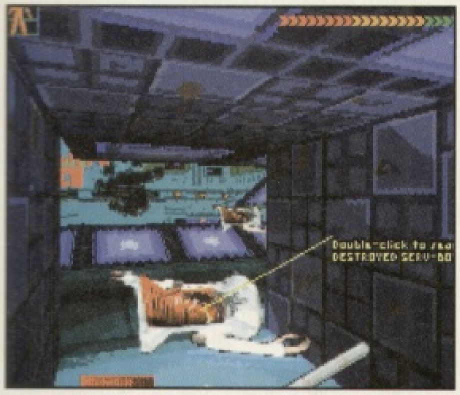
This is because it needs 555K of base memory free and 3200K of XMS memory free to run. The easiest way to get it working is to copy the complete contents of the RETDEMO directory from the CD drive onto your hard disk and then run it from there. You might have to edit your **CONFIG.SYS** and **AUTOEXEC.BAT** to free up enough memory (remember to REM out the EMM386 line, because the demo needs XMS memory, not EMS memory!).

If you're having real problems, call Gremlin on (0742) 753423. Please remember that this is a very early demo, and the final version will run from CD with no problems. It's worth any hassle, though, because it's a lovely demo!

System Shock

Electronic Arts





Deserted space stations overrun by aliens — hardly the most original plot in the world, but it's one that has been gripping pretty much all of us since it was first used many, many years ago, probably by Asimov or someone. Origin have taken that idea and brought it into the 90s with System Shock, a game that takes the look of Doom and mixes it with the atmosphere of Aliens.

Our demo places you right at the start of the game, and shows you a large part of the base, with all the futuristic objects you have to play around with. There is on-line help on all the way through to show you exactly how to use the objects, but after a couple of minute's play, you'll find yourself ignoring pretty much all of them as you get sucked further and further into the game.

Fans of Origin will be pleased to know that there is also a Windows catalogue of all of Origin's up-and-coming software for them to peruse, complete with full text files and advance screenshots. Who says we don't look after our readers?

Loading The Game...

To load the interactive catalogue, load Windows and then use the 'Run' option to run **CATALOG.EXE** file from the **GAMES** directory. After a couple of moments copying files, the catalogue will appear on screen.

To load the System Shock demo, log onto your CD-ROM (say, D:), and then enter the System Shock directory by typing

```
CD SHOCK
```

To load the game, type

```
SSHOCK
```

Game Controls

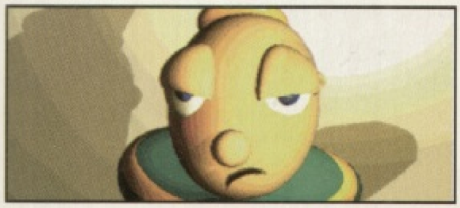
The game can be controlled from either the mouse or the keyboard. As you move the mouse around the screen, the cursor will change to reflect an action, such as a movement. Just click with the left mouse button to perform the action.

Keyboard Commands

Walk forward	S
Turn left	A
Turn right	D
Move backwards	X
Run forwards	Shift-S
Fast turn left	Shift-A
Fast turn right	Shift-D
Sidestep left	Z
Sidestep right	C
Lean left	Q
Lean right	E
Negate Leaning	W
Jump	SPACE
Stand up/Crouch	G
Lie down	B
Look up	R
Look down	V
Centre view	F
Use left-side icons	1-5
Use right-side icons	6-0
Select left MFD	F1-F5
Select right MFD	F6-F10
Change weapon	TAB
Fire weapon	ENTER
Clear displays	BACKSPACE
Toggle fullscreen	ALT-V
Change inventory page	PAGE UP/PAGE DOWN
Change HUD colours	CTRL-H
Full screen automap	CTRL-A
On-line help	ALT-H
Screen help overlay	ALT-O
Save game	CTRL-S
Load game	CTRL-L
Pause	P
Options panel	ESC

Little Big Adventure

Electronic Arts



He's the cutest little thing ever seen on a PC screen, and Dean Evans thinks he's the best thing since sliced bread. Little Big Adventure is the tale of a young creature called Twinsen, who is plotting to overthrow the evil Doctor Funfrock, a mad scientist who loves to do what all mad scientists love to do — threaten the existence of just about everything else on the planet.

Using the latest in rendering technology, French developers Adeline have managed to create a convincing 3D world that takes cartoon animation and turns it on its head. This demo sees our hero locked in a cell by the mad professor, with only wit, cunning and a mean right hook to get him free of his captors.

Loading The Game...

Log onto your CD-ROM directory (typically D:) and then go into the Little Big Adventure folder by typing:

```
CD LBA
```

Once you have the LBA prompt up, just type

```
LBA
```

to get into the game. Marvel at the glorious intro sequence if you wish, and then press any key to go the main menu.

Game Controls

The game couldn't be much easier to control.

Rotate	Left cursor, right cursor
Walk forward	Up cursor
Walk backward	Down cursor
Perform 'special'	SPACE
Change mode	CTRL

There are four modes Twinsen can operate in; Normal, Discreet, Athletic and Aggressive. In each mode, he has a special move he can perform, and it's the combination of these that gets you through the game. Just in case you can't figure it out, here's the full list:

Normal Mode	Talks, interacts with objects
Discreet	Can hide himself
Athletic	Makes Twinsen jump
Aggressive	Engages Twinsen in combat.

You can escape from the game at any point by pressing the ESCape key to return to the main menu.

Cyclemania

Accolade

If someone gave you the opportunity to kill yourself at high speed along a US highway in a make or break race alongside six of the fastest things on two wheels ever, you might not feel up to the challenge. Okay, so you haven't got a 3DO and so you can't play EA's superb conversion of Road Rash, but, if Accolade told you that they were using some of the most up-to-date video spooling technology to create one of the most realistic-looking racing games ever seen on the PC, you might sit up and listen. Cyclemania is both of these and much, much more.

In our demo, you get to race a single lap of a torturous outdoor course on the open road. There are five other mean riders to race against, but that isn't all you've got to go up against. Remember, this is the open road, and as a result there are more than enough challenges thrown your way in the form of traffic. You know the sort of thing — lorries, cars, planes, trains, etc — just about anything you would expect to see on a highway really!

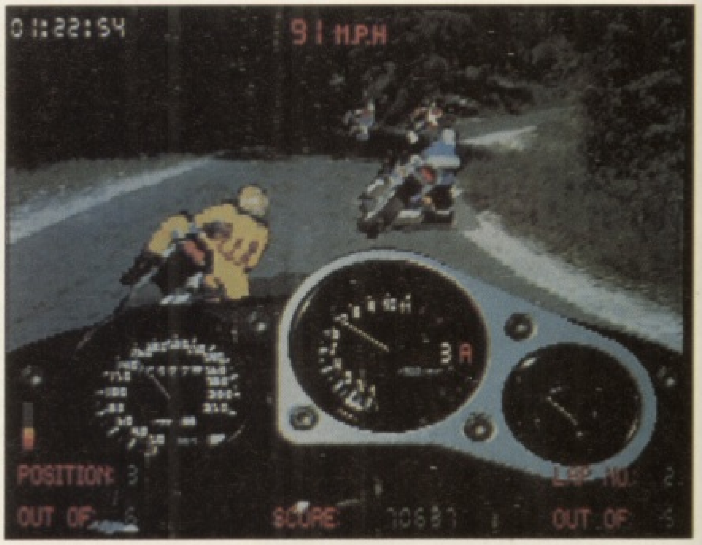
This is the most realistic simulation of motorcycle riding ever to appear on the PC and we guarrantee that if you play it for a mere five minutes, you'll be well and truly hooked. Watch out for the full review of Cyclemania in the next issue, when we'll be telling you whether this Accolade speedster has got what it takes to knock Road Rash off the top of the biking tree.

Loading The Game...

Log onto your CD-ROM, which generally is D: but some people have been known to come much later in the alphabet, (I'm an F: man myself) and then simply type

CYCLE

to run the Cyclemania demo. How much easier do you want us to make it? Do you want me to come round and do it for you? It's very, very easy.

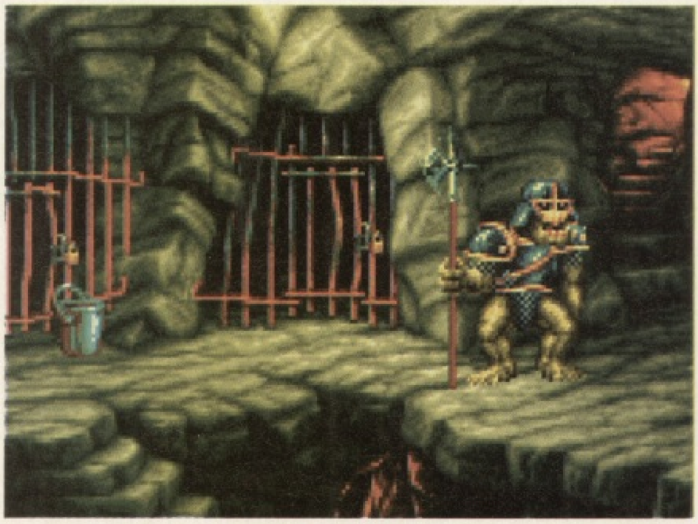


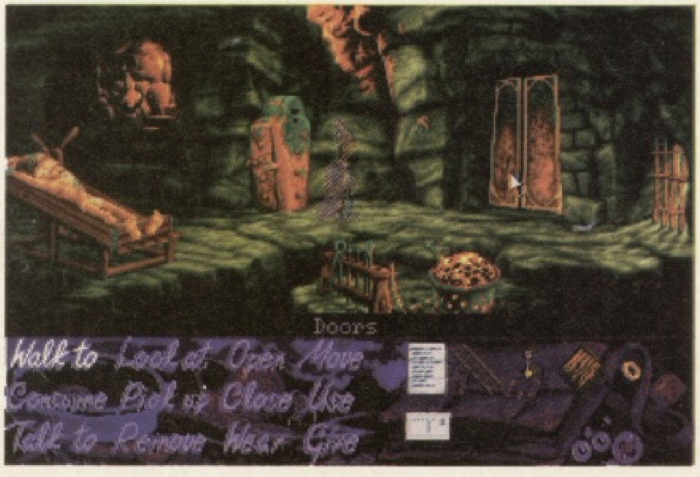
Game Controls

Hit any key to go into the race once you are presented with the option screen, and from that point the controls are as follows:

Accelerate	Up cursor
Brake	Down cursor
Steer left	Left cursor
Steer right	Right cursor
View map	M
Gears	G

To exit the race and the demo, just press ESCape.





Simon The Sorcerer

Adventure Soft

Simon The Sorcerer is Adventure Soft's first stab at a Monkey Island beater, and some people would say that they've come pretty close to achieving their goal. The game tells the story of a young man called Simon, who gets mixed up with his uncle's magic hat and is transported to a parallel universe, where witches and demons are real, woodworm talk and strange creatures called Swamplings constantly try to make you eat swamp mud.

In our demo, you begin wearing Gollum's magic ring, which renders you invisible. From this point you need to rescue the druid from the rack in the goblin's cave, help the woodworm in their quest for wood and free the Repulsar from her tower top cell. All in a day's work for young Simon, you might think, especially as he is in training to become the Sorcerer of the title.

But, you might be thinking, Simon The Sorcerer was released a long time ago wasn't it? This is a demo of the completely souped-up CD-ROM version, complete with hours of speech to replace the text, using the voice talents of everyone from Chris Barrie of Brittas Empire and Red Dwarf fame to Roger Blake, the star of TV's Spitting Image and the voice behind John Gielgud among others. Have fun!

Loading The Game...

To get the Simon The Sorcerer demo up and running, you'll need to run the **INSTALL** program, which will copy about 1.2 Megabytes of data to your hard disk, so make sure you have enough space to hold it. When you are ready, log onto your CD, and then go into the Simon The Sorcerer directory by typing the following command:

CD SIMON

and then type

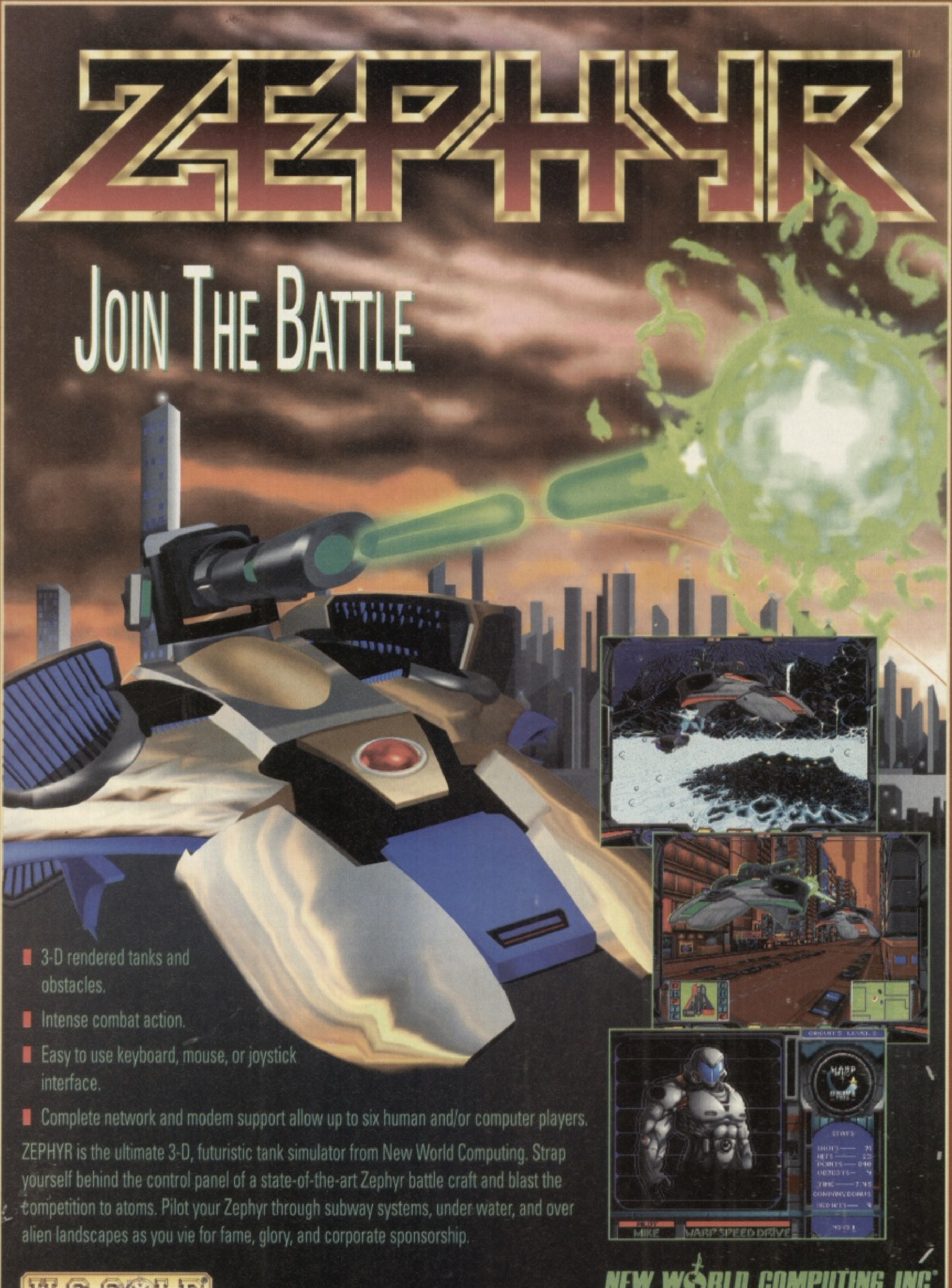
INSTALL

to get the game up and running.

Game Controls

The whole game is controlled with the mouse or cursor keys, and should need no explaining. To move Simon around the screen, just click where you want him to go, and to select any of the options at the bottom of the screen, just click on the word with the left mouse button, and then click on the object you want to interact with. The only exclusion to this rule is the USE instruction, with which you may need to click on two objects (USE something WITH something), but that will come as second nature.

To leave the demo, USE the postcard in your inventory, and then select the QUIT option from it. Have fun, and enjoy the woodworm. If you find yourself really stuck, there's a clue in your inventory, which needs to be USEd, which will get you through the first stage of the demo.



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- Easy to use keyboard, mouse, or joystick interface.
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ZEPHYR is the ultimate 3-D, futuristic tank simulator from New World Computing. Strap yourself behind the control panel of a state-of-the-art Zephyr battle craft and blast the competition to atoms. Pilot your Zephyr through subway systems, under water, and over alien landscapes as you vie for fame, glory, and corporate sponsorship.

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Dream Web

Empire

This is one adventure that has been promising to be a major hit ever since Creative Reality announced that they were going to create the world's first adult adventure game. No sniggering at the back, this is a game that has sex, violence and the occasional bit of bad language. But it's all in the name of art.

You play the part of Ryan, who has been having a lot of bad dreams. The reason behind this spate of sleepless nights is the fact that the Dreamweb — the place where all dreams come from, is being threatened by a group of evil people, led by a maniac priest, who have realised that they can control the world if they conquer the Dream Web. Ryan has been chosen by the keeper of the web as the guy to save the day, and so is sent to kill the seven threats.

Other magazines may have already shown you what the game looks like, but PC GAMES is the only magazine to show you what the game sounds like. Empire Software have pulled out all the stops with the audio and recorded a complete spoken soundtrack for the game, which really brings the characters to life.

In our demo, we catch up with Ryan outside the Regency Hotel, where the first of his intended targets, David Crane the Rock Singer, is staying. Ryan has to get into the hotel, get a room below Crane's and then find his way in to murder him. It sounds like it could be quite a ride!

Loading The Game...

The game will run direct from the CD, and all you need to do is log onto your CD directory, and then type

CD DW

to go into the Dreamweb directory. To run the game, all you need to do is type

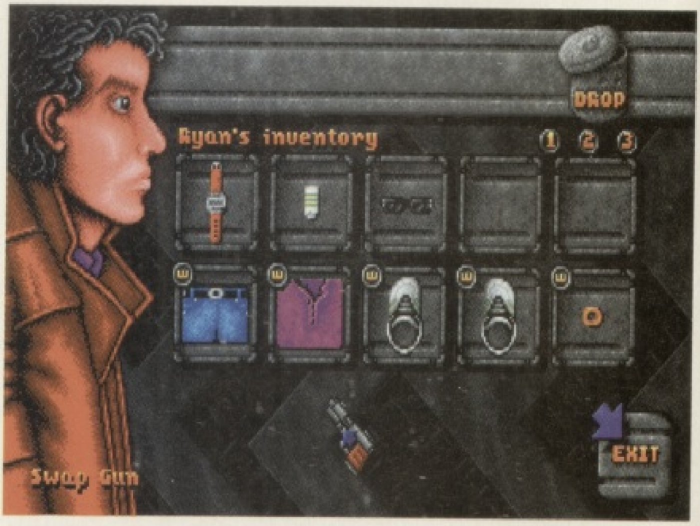
DREAMWEB

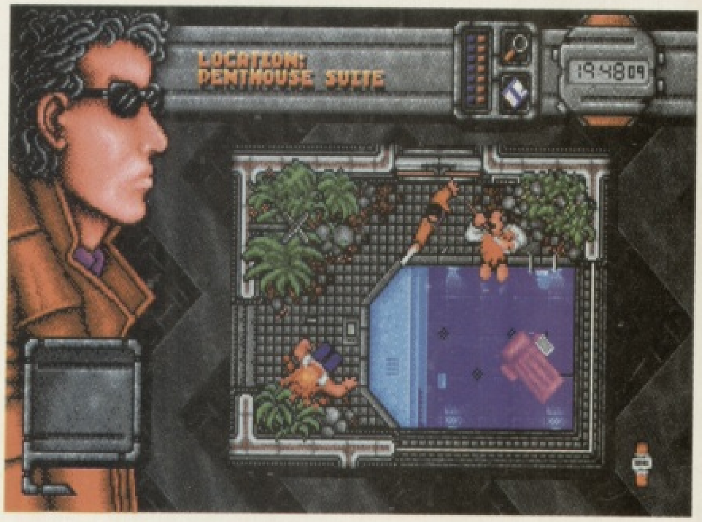
A word of warning: Dreamweb needs at least 590K of base memory to run, and some people might find it impossible to get that much memory with the CD drive attached. If that's the case, then copy the contents of the DW directory onto your hard disk, including the Speech subdirectory, and then strip down your system to give you the maximum available memory.

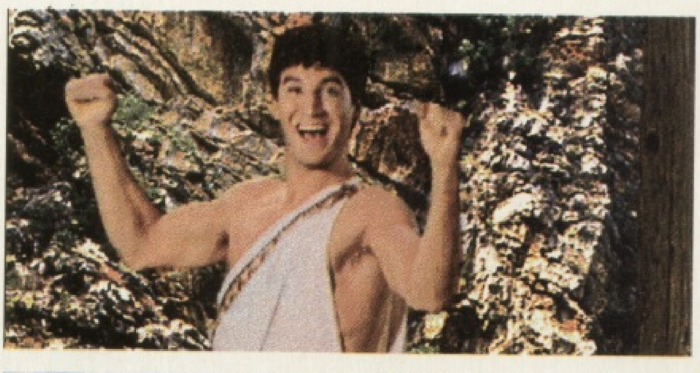
Game Controls

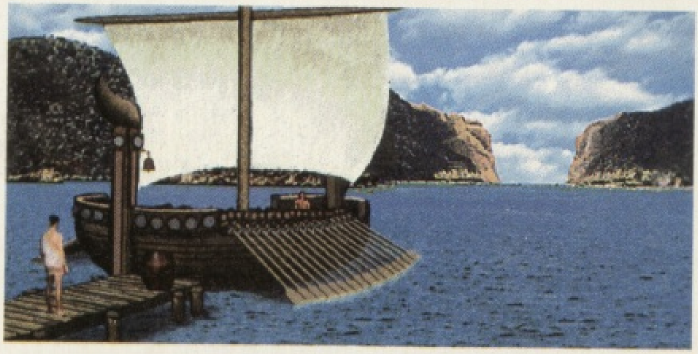
The game is controlled with the mouse, and clicking anywhere in the screen will get Ryan to walk to the selected location. Clicking with the left mouse button on the large picture of Ryan at the side of the screen will open the inventory, and left clicking on objects will bring up a description. As you select things, icons appear at the top of the screen, which can then be used to manipulate objects.

To leave the demo, just press ESCape.









Wrath of the Gods

Maxis

Interactive Movies are springing up all over the place, and Maxis are just one of the companies hoping to lead the pack. Wrath Of The Gods is a game about Greece, and we're not talking John Travolta here. You play the part of a young man, raised by a friendly centaur in the mythical past, and have to search the countryside, chatting with the locals in an attempt to discover what your destiny is supposed to be.

The big selling point of this game, however, is the fact that all of the graphics have been digitised from film of real actors, and the result is a convincing real world that manages to capture humour and atmosphere, while remaining very playable.

Loading The Game...

The game itself runs under Windows, so you'll need to load Windows and then run the **SETUP.EXE** program, which you'll find in the SETUP folder on the CD. This will create an icon for the demo on the Windows desktop, as well as an icon for the README file on the main directory.

Game Controls

The game is controlled with the mouse in the standard graphic adventure way. In the bottom corner of the screen are five icons which allow you to talk to people, manipulate objects and move around, and all you need to do is click on an icon to select it, and then click on the main screen where you want the event to take place.

E.g, if you want to talk to someone, then you click on the Speak icon, which looks just like a speech bubble, and then click on the character you want to speak to. To leave the demo at any point, press ESCape or select QUIT from the options menu from the icon bank.

Hardball 4

Accolade

The Hardball series of games has been one that Accolade have just kept building on. What was once the greatest sports simulation to ever hit the Commodore 64 has since evolved into one of the best sports simulations ever, and we've got a fully playable demo right here on our cover CD. Do you really need an explanation of how it all works?

Loading The Game...

To load the game simply log on to your CD, and then type

```
CD H4DEMO
```

to go into the Hardball 4 directory. Once you've done that, then you're just a stone's throw away from typing

```
HB4DEMO
```

to run the playable demo itself.

Game Controls

The game can be controlled from the cursor keys, or from a joystick if you have one plugged in. To set the player controls, use the cursor keys to select the options screen, and then highlight the player control icons on the right of the screen, using the SPACE bar to cycle between the various options.

Once in the game itself, you will be shown a table of different options. To select an option, just move the joystick in the direction shown, or press the relevant cursor key. Once you have chosen your play, you will go into the active part of the game, where you need to press your fire button or the ENTER key to perform your chosen move. What could be simpler?

To leave the demo, just press ESCape and answer 'Yes' to the 'Leave to DOS' prompt.

Bureau 13

Gametek

When it comes to producing full CD-ROM software, Gametek are one of the companies who are really taking it seriously. I'm not saying that there is a bandwagon waiting to be jumped on here, but CD seems to be the medium of the moment. Luckily, most of Gametek's up-and-coming software is particularly high end, and there is really no way you can take a segment of it and try and make a playable demo (so they tell us).

Instead, they have settled for producing some of the best rendered, non-interactive demos around, such as this, which sets the scene quite nicely for their latest CD-ROM foray, Bureau 13 — a supernatural detective agency, made up of some of the strangest Private Investigators you have ever seen. You want hats, you've got hats. You want women in large exo-skeletons climbing out of vans, you've got that too. You want a gritty, kind of husky monologue with double-entendres and bad jokes, well... you'll just have to play it and see. I'll tell you what. If you want more information on this release, read the news story on page 16.

Loading The Demo

To run this Bureau 13 demo, log onto your CD, and then type

```
CD B13
```

to go into the Bureau 13 directory. Then, if you want to run the demo without sound (and heaven knows why you would want to do that), all you need to type is

```
PLAYFLAC B13.AV
```

If you want to run the game with sound, and have a Soundblaster or 100% compatible soundcard, then the format of the command you need to enter is as below:

```
PLAYFLAC /ssb.sd,
```

It may sound a touch complicated but, as long as you keep these instructions close at hand, you should have no problems in running the demo.

Mission Critical & Deathgate

Accolade

Accolade are constantly looking further into the realms of CD-ROM, or so it seems this month. Mission Critical and Deathgate are just two of the products that the mighty A are releasing early next year, and here's your chance to get a sneak look at the pair of them in this rolling, non-interactive demo.

First of all you'll get to gaze with admiration upon still screenshots of the fantastic RPG Deathgate, and then you'll find yourself immersed in the dark and sinister futuristic world of Mission Critical...

Loading The Demo

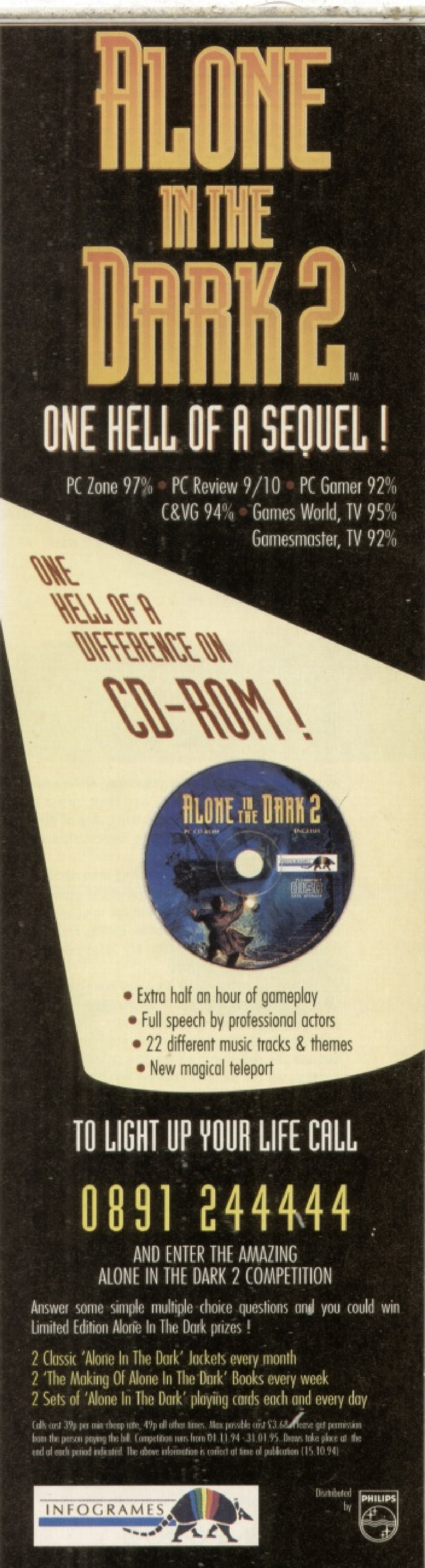
This couldn't be much easier really. All you need to do is log onto your CD directory, and then go into the folder containing the demo by typing

```
CD DEMO
```

Now all you need to do to run the animations is type

```
DEMO
```

and then follow the on-screen instructions. To leave the demo at any point, just hit the ESCape key.



ALONE IN THE DARK 2 TM

ONE HELL OF A SEQUEL !

PC Zone 97% • PC Review 9/10 • PC Gamer 92%
C&VG 94% • Games World, TV 95%
Gamesmaster, TV 92%

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INFOGRAMES

Distributed by PHILIPS

PC GAMES
Require 256-colour VGA, 4Mb of RAM and DOS 5.0; 386 PC minimum
HD DISK Tested for ALL known viruses!
PC GAMES Rated 88%
The Clue!
Go 'on the blag' in this fully-playable demo of Neo's criminally-good graphic adventure!
PLUS!
Flying Tigers
Excellent Shareware shoot-'em-up action ahoy!

Would we forsake you lovable floppy owners. Of course we wouldn't. That's why we're bringing you the latest in criminal adventure games — The Clue! — plus one of the fastest, most exciting shoot-em-ups you have ever seen!

Flying Tigers
Shareware

Vertically-scrolling shoot-'em-ups were once all the rage, and this is one Shareware title that shows that they never really lost their appeal. Take a lone fighter, and then stick them over an extremely hostile landscape, where everything from enemy bombers to volcanoes try and take you out of the sky.

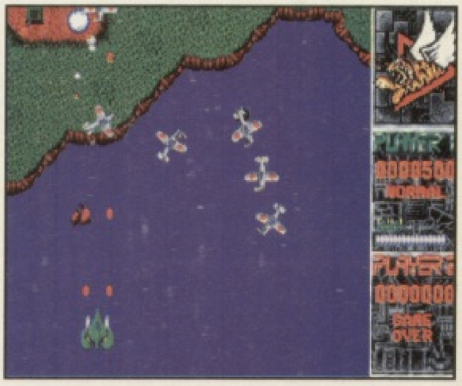
Then occasionally give them a large bad guy to take out who, when destroyed, drops some kind of weapon power-up, and you've got the classic formula of a shoot-'em-up, which is exactly what Flying Tigers is. Enjoy it — that's what it's there for...

Loading the Game

Once you've installed the game, simply log onto the Tiger directory by typing **C:\PCG\TIGER**, and there you'll find a file called **TGR.EXE**. Type this name in at the DOS prompt and, before you know it, you'll find yourself in the skies. Go to the Option screen to adjust any aspect of the game, from speed to controls.

Game Controls

The game is controlled primarily with the cursor keys, but you can change that to the keys of your choice on the Option screen. Essentially all you need to do is fire at everything in sight using the SPACE bar, and collect the power-up tokens that are dropped now and again. Watch out for the Tiger tokens that the airships drop when destroyed, as these replenish that ever-important energy bar on the right-hand side of the screen. Let it run down and obviously you go kaboom!



The Clue!
Neo Software

What happens if you take a graphic adventure about a detective chasing a criminal, and then turn it on its head? You get The Clue!, that's what, one of the most original adventure games to ever come out of Germany.

You play Matt Stuvysant, a young man who has just arrived in post-war London to one of the most vibrant crime scenes ever. All around him are tales of riches to be earnt from burglary and other thefts, and he soon finds himself more than merely interested in the scene, he becomes involved.

From this point on, the only way is up as he breaks and enters his way through all manner of locations, planning the robberies meticulously, getting a gang together to do the job and eventually working up through the ranks until he reaches the stage where he knocks over the Bank of England and makes a play for the crown jewels themselves.

Loading the Game

Once you've selected the game from the menu, and it's installed onto your hard disk, all you need to do is go into the Clue directory, by typing **C:\PCG\THECLUE**, and then type **THECLUE!** to load and run the game.

Game Controls

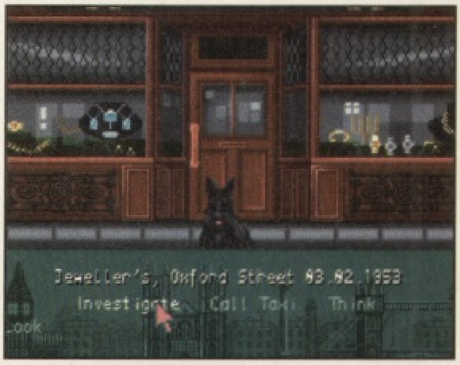
The whole game is controlled with the mouse or cursor keys, and uses a very simple menu system to move you around the game. At any given point you'll find a selection of options at the bottom of the screen, that range from Move (to another location) through Think (which allows you to look back at the story so far, as well as view any plans you may have made), Call Taxi (which gets you from one part of the city to another) and Investigate (with which you can stand outside a building for hours, making detailed notes about what goes on in there).

This demo will only let you get as far as the planning stage of any robbery, but should convince you that this is one game that is well worth getting hold of.

Making a boot disk

If you're having problems running any of this month's floppy games try making a boot disk. Take a freshly formatted floppy disk, slap it into the disk drive (I'll assume it's drive A for the moment) and type: **SYS A:**. The system files will be transferred and within seconds you'll have a boot disk on your hands.

All you then need to do is leave the floppy in the disk drive, reset your machine and finally try loading the game again. Don't take the disk out of the machine as it boots up because you want the PC to read the information from the floppy rather than the hard disk.



Loading your coverdisk...

① It doesn't get any easier than this. First carefully remove your PC GAMES disk from the cover of the mag and then release it from its cellophane prison. Now insert the disk into your drive.

② Type A: (or B:, depending on the drive type) and then press the RETURN key to log onto your lavishly-crafted PC GAMES disk.

③ Type the legend PCG and press the RETURN key. Choose the program you want to load using the UP/DOWN cursor keys. It's as simple as that...

ALERT! ALERT! My disk is faulty!

Due to the massive number of disks duplicated, the odd one might be a touch faulty. If you're unlucky enough to get one of these, don't despair because help is at hand. Whatever you do DON'T SEND THEM TO US! Simply send them off to the following address with an SAE for 28p:

PC GAMES Bodged Disks,
Diskxpress,
Unit 7, Willow Court,
Bourton Industrial Park,
Bourton-on-the-water,
Gloucestershire GL54 2HQ.

If you think you can solve your problems over the phone, try calling the disk helpline on **(0451) 810788**. The helpline is open between 3pm and 5pm on weekdays.

What the... HELP!

The Clue! and Fighting Tigers both require 4Mb of Expanded (EMS) memory to run and both of them require at least 580K of free base memory. If you have this, not Extended memory (XMS), they shouldn't cause you any problems whatsoever.

- These demos do not work under Windows and may not be compatible with Doublespace, QEMM 386 or Stacker disk compression software. Ignore at your peril!

The fine print bit...

The PC GAMES coverdisks are rigorously checked for viruses, but coverdisks are used at the reader's own risk. PC GAMES can accept no responsibility for damage to either data or hardware caused by using the coverdisks.

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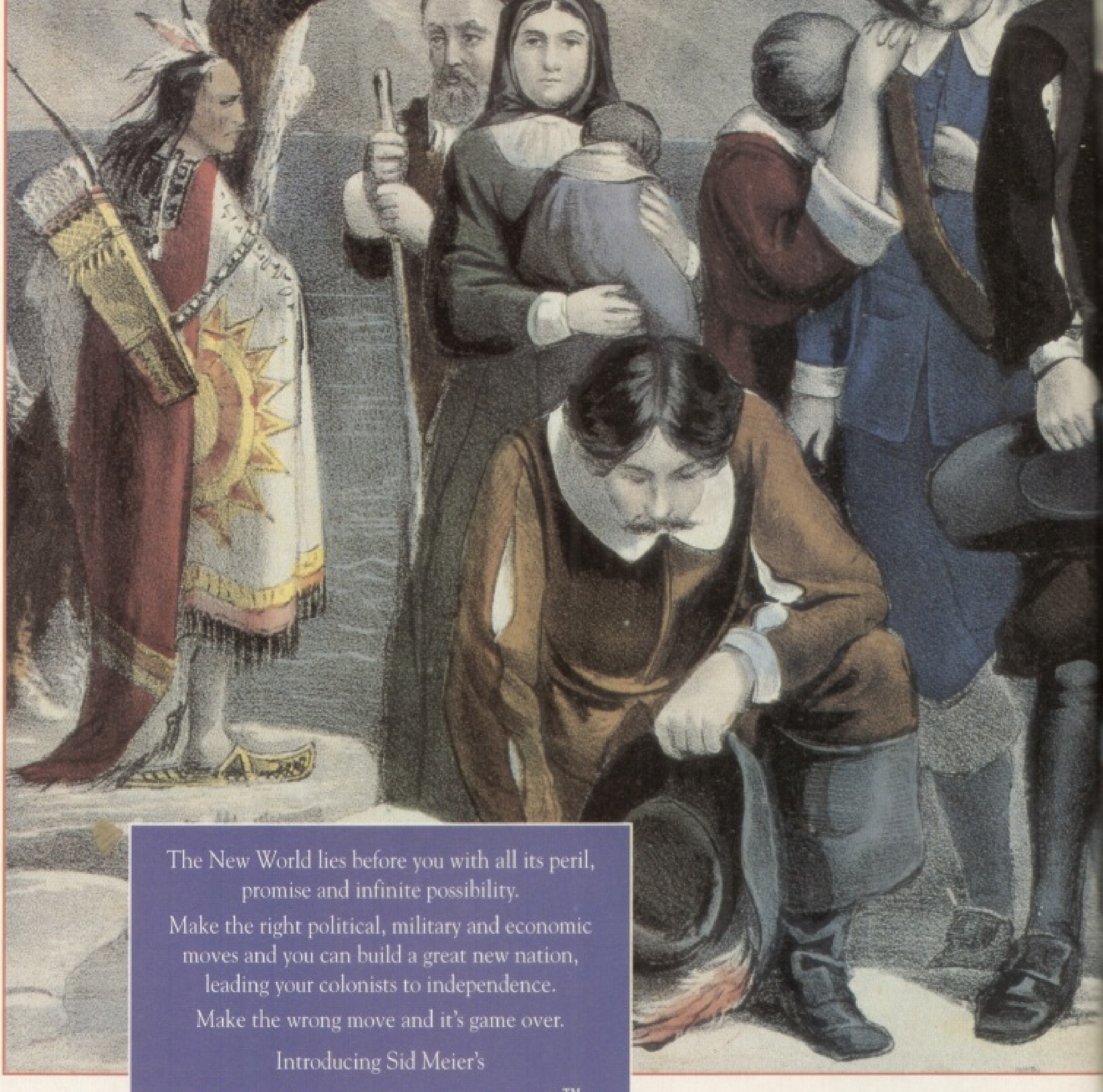
BE THERE AT THE



The Landing of the Pilgrims at Plymouth, Mass. Dec 22nd 1960, Currier and Ives, 1876; Museum of the City of New York, The Harry T Peters Collection.

The New World lies before you with all its peril,
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French *Buy Some Of Our Ocean!*

Manchester-based software house Ocean Software has sold approximately 24% of its equity to French international conglomerate Chargeurs. This adds Ocean to Chargeurs' ever-growing list of media interests, which include a stake in BSkyB as well as links with film production and distribution.

Ocean was founded 11 years ago by David Ward and Jon Woods. Over the years, Ocean has beaten US and Japanese rivals to secure game licences for many big-name films, such as Batman, Jurassic Park and The Flintstones, and now has sales of around $90 million.

"Chargeurs are our first partners and we share a very common vision of the future of interactive products," says Ocean's co-founder, David Ward. "The deal will allow us to explore ways to benefit from the considerable revenues to be generated by the convergence of the different strands of global entertainment.

"The French are backing state-of-the-art British technology and, in return, we are getting strategic assistance through their strong links with the entertainment industry, as well as the extra financial muscle to grab a bigger bite of the huge world-wide computer games software market."

The deal is reputed to be worth millions of dollars to Ocean. With the cost of developing for CD-ROM somewhere between $250,000 and $2 million a title, the extra cash generated by the investment is likely to be channelled into launching new products.

(By the way, Ocean's in-house programming team has been given a new name. From now on, all games programmed in-house will be credited to Tribe. "In the past, all games written by us have been simply 'an Ocean game'," explains Ocean's Stephen Hey. "This isn't fair on our in-house programmers, as they're a talented bunch who deserve more credit. This is one way of giving them more of an identity." How *caring*.)

Pump Up The **Volume!**

Ever since the arrival of Frankie Goes To Hollywood and, more recently, The Reynolds Sisters (ha-ha-ha-ha-ha-ha!), the music industry emjoyed an intense love affair with computers because of the ease with which they allow record companies to create pop masterpieces.

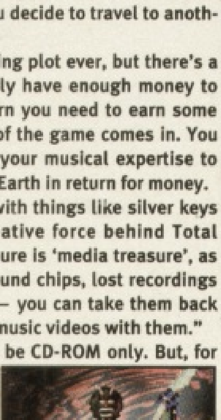
Now it seems that relationship has gone one step further with the birth of a totally new concept in home entertainment. We're not talking babies here, but the arrival of Total Distortion, Mindscape's 'Music Video Adventure Game', which'll be hitting the shelves next month.

Total Distortion is set on Alternate Earth #28. You are an adventurous music video producer with a large inheritance to blow on something more rewarding than sex and drugs, so, obviously, you decide to invest in a business venture. But this is no ordinary money-making exercise — rather than buying a chain of record stores or something, you decide to travel to another dimension in your control tower. Hmm...

Okay, this may not sound like the most exciting plot ever, but there's a twist. Even though you're a millionaire, you only have enough money to teleport to your destination, so in order to return you need to earn some more cash! And this is where the music aspect of the game comes in. You see, from you control tower you're able to use your musical expertise to create all-new pop vids and export them back to Earth in return for money.

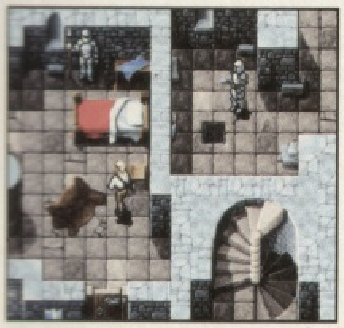
"In most adventure games you're rewarded with things like silver keys or bright gems," reckons Joe Sparks, the creative force behind Total Distortion. "But in Total Distortion the real treasure is 'media treasure', as in video clips you can grab with your camera, sound chips, lost recordings and more. They don't just sit in your inventory — you can take them back to your tower and create long, complex, layered music videos with them."

Unsurprisingly, this all means the game will be CD-ROM only. But, for once, it seems the disc will be used to its fullest. Indeed, Jim Mackonochie, Mindscape's Sales and Marketing Director, commented: "This is the most exciting CD game I have ever seen. It is the first time that the gaming and pop video cultures have merged to create a great game."



But whether the coupling of these two cultures is a good thing remains to be seen...

A Game Of **Conquers**

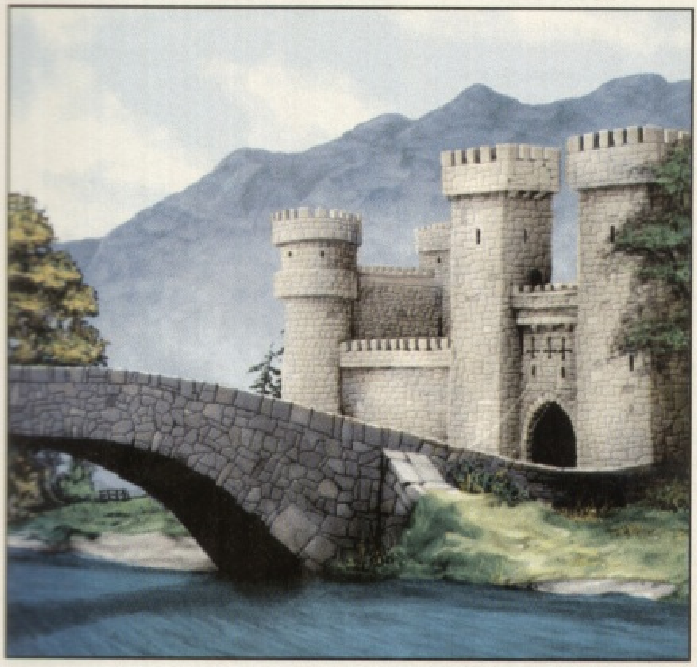


Having been responsible for Alien Breed and Alien Breed 2, the natural progression for the duo behind them, Rico Holmes and Andreas Tadic, is... er... a game based around the strategy boardgame Risk, right? Well, kind of.

King Of Thieves, the team's next full-price release, takes all the elements of the popular boardgame and adds a plethora of arcade-style sequences not possible with a bit of cardboard and some plastic soldiers.

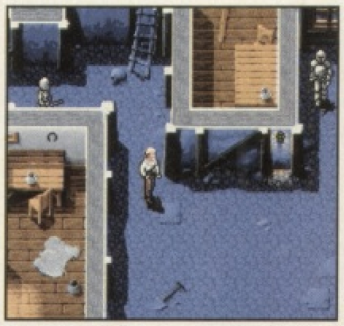
Set in Medieval England, the game casts you as an aspiring king. But in those days the right to rule a country wasn't merely down to the fact that your mum had her head on a few coins. Nope, to be a ruler you had to be hard. And to be hard you had to fight a lot. And this is where the arcade sections come in.

"The game is split into several distinct parts," says Team 17's Public Relations 'geezer', Alan Bunker. "The strategy part of King Of Thieves will be just as involving as a dedicated strategy game, but interspersed with arcade sections where the player has to storm castles, raid passing ships and so on.



"We're aiming the game at people who want something with a bit more depth than a beat-'em-up or shoot-'em-up, but aren't prepared to sit down and read the tome-like manuals which accompany most strategy games."

Although the game is still very much in its infancy, early demos shown at the recent European Computer Trade Show certainly had most people talking. Watch out for more news on this just as soon as we get it.



Zelda! *Bless You...*

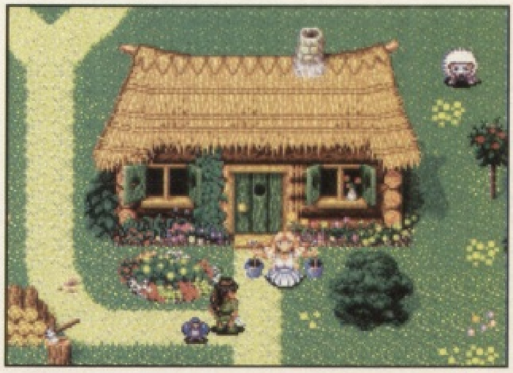
'Zelda' may sound to most like the noise someone makes whilst sneezing with a pair of pliers clamped around their nose, but to console owners this curious word refers to a series of cutesy arcade adventures which became some of the most popular games for their system.

Yes, this is all very well, but what's it got to do with you, the more discerning PC owner? Quite a lot, actually. You see, Team 17 will soon be revealing its Zelda-inspired adventure entitled Witchwood.

This is certainly no bad thing. The Zelda games were created by the bloke who invented Mario (sorry to be so vague, but he's got an awfully long Japanese name and I'd never get it past my spell checker) and although they were no means the most advanced adventures the world has ever seen, they were brilliantly written with ingenious puzzles and demanding arcade sequences.

Team 17 promises to take the Zelda ethos and add its own inimitable style, as well as make use of the PC's undoubtedly superior processing power. "Rather than using the single flip-screen system used by most graphic adventures, Witchwood will have huge, smooth scrolling maps which the player can wander around while interacting with the many in-game characters," said one Team 17 spokesperson yesterday.

Witchwood will be released in early 1995 on both floppy and CD-Rom. "The CD version will feature speech rather than the subtitles used on the floppy version, but all formats will have the same addictive gameplay, gorgeous graphics and technical excellence," offered our spokesperson.



CHARTS

Top 10 PC Games

1. Colonization
MicroProse

2. Doom 2
VIE

3. System Shock
Origin

4. Doom
Id Software

5. Space Simulator
Microsoft

6. Sim City 2000
Maxis

7. Overlord
VIE

8. TIE Fighter
VIE

9. Wing Commander
Origin

10. Outpost
Sierra

Top 5 CD-ROM Games

1. Doom 2
VIE

2. PGA Tour 486
Electronic Arts

3. F1 Grand Prix
MicroProse

4. Bloodnet
MicroProse

5. Deluxe Strip Poker
No idea!

Top 5 PC Budget Games

1. F1 Grand Prix
PowerPlus

2. Stunt Car Racer
Kixx

3. Out Run
Kixx

4. Ultima VII
The Hit Squad

5. Doom
Id Software

Hell-oh! Imp here again. I've noticed that everybody these days is banging on endlessly about the 'Information Super Highway' and 'Net-surfing'. What *is* all the fuss about? If you ask me...

"The **'Net'** is for no-life saddies!"

This has got to stop. For several months now, the so-called 'Information Super Highway' has been in the news, in the mags, on the radio... and on my bloody nerves!

I'm not knocking modems as such — indeed, we use them all the time down here to list the case histories of newly-acquired souls earmarked for torturing. But all this "interacting in Cyberspace" nonsense, and "commuting on the Infobahn" tosh, is utter, utter, *utter* rubbish.

Let's face it, the only people who gain any real use from the Internet are individuals severely lacking in social skills. After all, why conduct a conversation by stabbing away at a keyboard when you could be chatting on the phone? Speaking to someone is a quicker and more efficient way of interacting. And it won't cost you 12p a minute, either.

This form of communication is in danger of ruining social behaviour as we know it. As Internet users become more and more alienated from normal conversations, so their need to exchange information and thoughts via a keyboard will increase — possibly to the extent that they'll carry portable terminals around and link up to other saddies in the real world.

Some could argue that the Internet provides a much needed forum for debate, a place where computer users can vent their frustrations and air their views. And judging by the numerous conferences on the boards they'd be right. But look closer at the topics being discussed, and the truth suddenly becomes horribly evident: "Is Doom II any good?" and "Which Doctor Who Episode Is Best?" Exciting, eh? Why don't these people ask their friends what they think if they really care that much? Who would want to listen to or trust the opinions of people who you've never even met?

And who could overlook the invaluable service the Internet provides to people who wish to download images for private work? Not I — there's nothing more appealing to me than calling up a picture of Kurt Cobain just after he quite literally bit the bullet. As for the numerous scantily-cald ladies on offer... well, they're are far cheaper ways of getting your sexual kicks.

Worst of all is the stupid language these cyberberks have adopted. Instead of a simple 'Bye', it's 'Byeeeeee', with as many 'e's' as humanly possible. Presumably this is meant to sound trendy or something. Or should that be treeeeendy?

Nope, by all means use modems for transferring vital data. But for goodness sake, let's stop regarding Cyberspace as an integral part of our lives. Stick to chatting on the phone and get a life.

● Do you agree or disagree with Imp's rantings? Write in and tell us at: PC GAMES, Priory Court, 30-32 Farringdon Lane, London EC1R 3AU. By the way, Imp's opinions are his own, and no way reflect those of PC GAMES or its publishers.

Advice For **Mums And Dads**

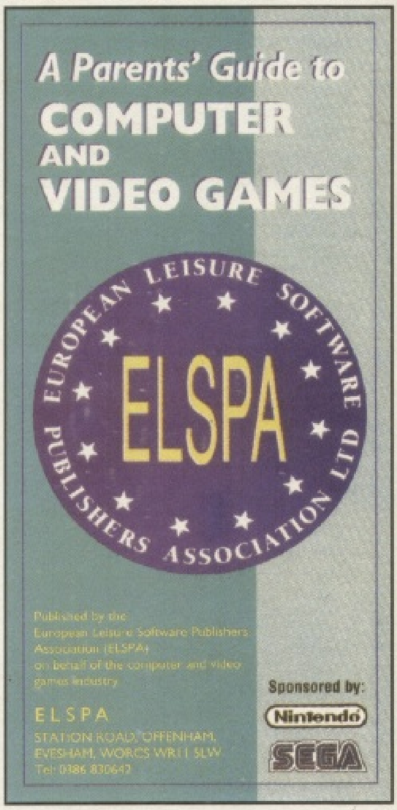
You may remember that last month the European Leisure Software Publishers Association, the software industry's very own self-regulating body, published its 'White Paper' on the seedier side of the software industry. Well, this month ELSPA publishes its 'A4 Paper With Three Folds In It' Games Players' Charter, all contained within a new leaflet succinctly entitled: A Parents' Guide To Computer And Video Games.

This document's aim is to address concerns some parents may have about computer games. "The Games Players' Charter contains a combination of common sense advice to parents and players, and commitments from the industry to act in a responsible manner at all times," says Mark Strachan, chairman of ELSPA and boss of Domark.

"Sadly, unlike previous generations' toys, such as model trains or dolls, parents tend to find computer and video games complex and inaccessible. As a consequence, they have tended to view them with a certain amount of unwarranted suspicion. This is why we are introducing the Charter and the Parents' Guide as further reassurances to parents."

The leaflet tries to outline the advantages of computer games. According to ELSPA, computer games help kids learn to think and act more quickly, improve their attention spans, learn from experiences, and become familiar with new technology. However, most parents will already know these 'advantages' as shrewd kids probably reeled them off when they were trying to convince their mums and dads to fork out for a computer in the first place. I know I did.

This is the latest in a long list of ideas that ELSPA has come up with to combat the wave of criticism that has recently been aimed at computer and video games. A few months back, all members of ELSPA agreed to include an age suitability rating on all packaging. Empire has gone one step further by recently submitting Dream Web (which you'll find reviewed this issue on page 86) to the British Board of Classification, which resulted in the game receiving an '18' rating.



A Parents' Guide to
COMPUTER
AND
VIDEO GAMES

Published by the
European Leisure Software Publishers Association (ELSPA)
on behalf of the computer and video games industry

ELSPA
STATION ROAD, OFFENHAM,
EVESHAM, WORCS WR11 5LW
Tel: 0386 830642

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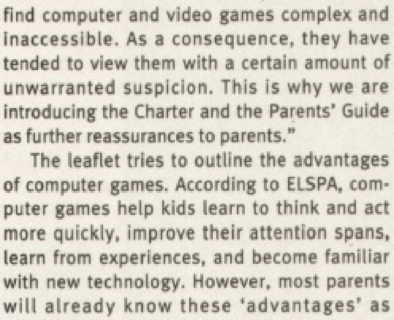
Screen **In-Vader**



Seventeen years after they originally burst on to the big screen, Han Solo, Luke Skywalker, Princess Leia and the rest of the Star Wars gang are back on screens of a different kind — the PC's.

Star Wars Screen Entertainment comes from LucasArts, the people who bought you X-Wing, Rebel Assault and TIE Fighter. Comprising 14 different modules, the program works in exactly the same way as other screensavers, but instead of projecting flying toasters or starry nights, SWSE chucks up images from the films, many of which are animated and accompanied by the rousing Star Wars theme or other sound effects.

"Star Wars Screen Entertainment will easily distinguish itself from the many screensaver products available," says Producer Kalani Streicher. "We're in a 'galaxy far, far away' from flying pigs and toasters. Star Wars Screen Entertainment uses high-end video production techniques, multimedia effects, digitised sound and detailed animations to provide an insider's guide to the Star Wars universe."

The most exciting news for die-hard Star Wars fans is the hidden message from George Lucas himself embedded deep within the saver, revealing top secret details about the next Star Wars trilogy, which is due on our cinema screens in 1997. "Star Wars Screen Entertainment provides a wealth of information about the original Star Wars movie," says Mr Lucas. "People who are interested in Star Wars Screen Entertainment are most likely fans of the trilogy, so hopefully they'll enjoy a glimpse of what's to come."

Star Wars Screen Entertainment is available now, priced £29.99. It runs from Windows and, although a 33MHz 386 is recommended, we'd advise a 486 minimum.

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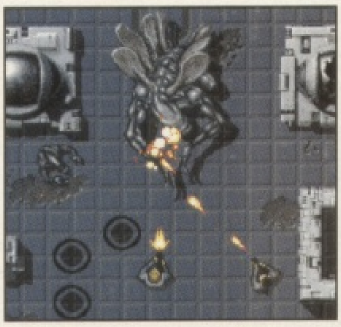
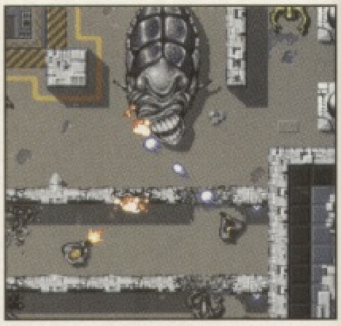
Breedin' Hell





Never ones to let a cash cow pass without milking it until its teats are sore and squirt blood, Team 17 is currently adding the finishing touches to Alien Breed: Tower Assault, the latest addition to the Alien Breed series.

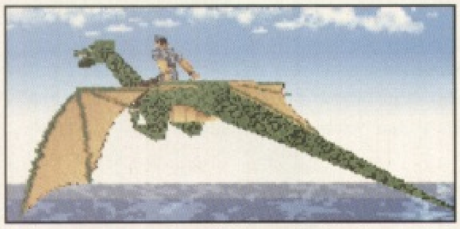
Whilst the screenshots may not give the impression that much has changed since the first Alien Breed game, many aspects of the playabilty have been tweaked, and the result is a much tighter, slicker game.

"You can now walk backwards and still shoot," offers Team 17's Alan Bunker, "which has enabled us to put in more varied alien attack patterns. And there's no longer only one set route through the game. Many levels can be completed in more than one way so there are literally hundreds of ways to finish the game."

Perhaps the most significant difference between this game and the first is the ability to shoot your partner when playing in two-player mode. "This adds a whole new dimension to the game," sniggers Alan. "Although it's best to be co-operative, more fun can be had by blasting your opponent in the back."

Alien Breed: Tower Assault will be released this month on floppy disk with a CD version to follow, which comes complete with added intro and cut-scene animations.

Three Past Midnight



Computer crusties will be excited to learn that Lords Of Midnight, Mike Singleton's revolutionary (for the time, at least) adventure released on the Spectrum ten years ago, is being spat on and polished up for its first outing on PC.

But rather than simply converting the 1984 classic lock, stock and barrel, Lords Of Midnight: The Citadel is to be an all-new adventure set many years after the original game and its sequel, Doomdark's Revenge.

In The Citadel, you control six characters, but as the game progresses your party increases in size. If this sounds like too much to handle then you can opt to control only one of the characters, but the other five will fall under the control of the computer and move from place to place making their own decisions.

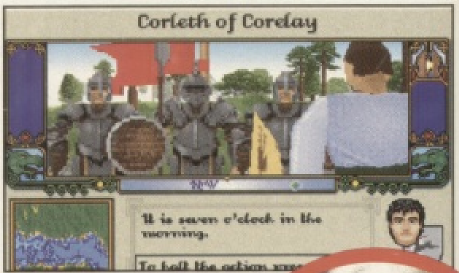
As always, the aim of the game is to overthrow an evil maniac — but this time there's a clause: at least one member of the House Of The Moon must be alive at the end of the game. Don't worry if this sounds confusing — all will be explained in the final game.

To cater for the PC gamer, The Citadel will be far more complicated than its predecessors, with an intuitive, mouse-driven control system replacing the original's antiquated and limited text-driven interface.

The most interesting new feature, however, is the ability to 'time-lock' the game. This means that the game-time days are synchronised with real-time days by locking them to your PC's internal clock. So if you don't play The Citadel for, say, seven days, when you next load the game up, a week will have passed and your characters will have spent seven days making their own decisions and moving around.

However, we do have to question this feature — what happens, for example, if you return a month later to discover that your party has died, wrecking all your hard work? — so the ability to turn this off will be more than welcomed by us.

With its enhanced graphics and more involved gameplay, Lords Of Midnight: The Citadel looks set to appeal to newcomers and experienced Midnight players alike when it's released early next year.



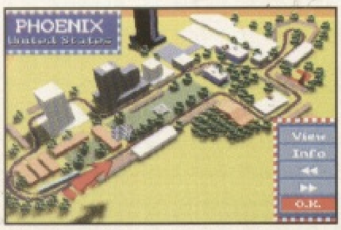
It is seven o'clock in the morning.

To halt the action

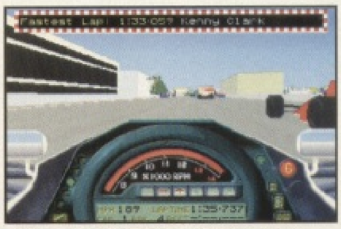
Classic Moments In Games

With Sir Harvey Barrington, Games-As-Art Critic.

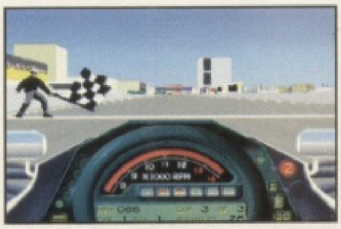
At long last I've received a nomination for a Classic Moment that isn't taken from a LucasArts game — I knew someone would think of one eventually! Adrian Randell of Woking is the plucky young chap in question, and he's brought this wonderful moment from MicroProse's Formula One Grand Prix to my attention...



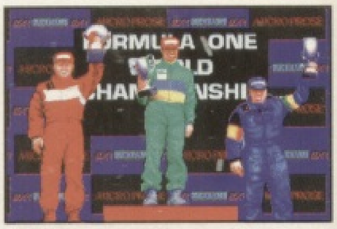
It's a beautiful day in Phoenix, Arizona: hot, dry and dusty — in other words, just right for Formula One motor racing...



...The drivers nervously rev their engines on the starting grid. Suddenly the green light goes on, and the drivers roar off...

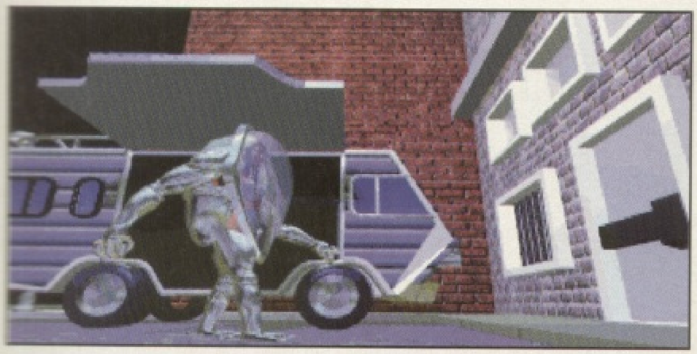


Having endured lap after gruelling lap, the winner crosses the finishing line as the steward waves the chequered flag...



...The victors take their places on the winners' podium, celebrating in classic fashion with a foaming bottle of champagne.

● If you have a Classic Moment you'd like Sir Harv to recall for your pleasure, then write in to us as the usual PC GAMES address. There's a prize for those people whose suggestions we use!



Unnatural *Detection*

Anyone who's been following the much-hyped X-Files, BBC2's Dempsey & Makepeace with aliens, will have some idea of what Bureau 13, GameTek's forthcoming multimedia experience, will be all about.

The issue of whether or not things such as UFOs, ghosts and aliens do exist is one which will never really be resolved unless the spirit of a dead space traveller decides to take TV cameras around his disc-shaped vehicle. But there's no doubting they make great premises around which to base computer games.

Bureau 13 puts you in charge of the eponymous division's investigative team. For them, the paranormal is normal as they go around solving all cases involving events which can't be explained by science. The team's brief is simple: analyse and identify supernatural activity and, if necessary, terminate the offending entities.

Gametek isn't giving much away at this stage. The only thing the publisher is prepared to reveal is that Bureau 13 will be, they claim, "a complex mystery filled with intriguing characters and danger around every corner."

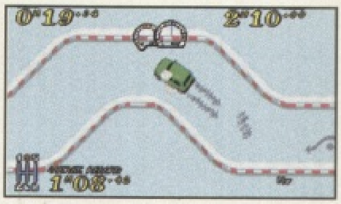
The rolling demo we received backed this up with some nice ray-traced 3D animations and atmospheric sound effects. How well the game itself plays, though, is as much a mystery as the cases you'll have to solve. You'll be able to decide for yourself when the game is released sometime in January.

US Gold *Moves Up A Gear*

We always thought that the programmers' life was a boring one, but we've been proved wrong by those funsters at Rare — for their new racing game, US Gold took them all rallying for a day so they could experience how real rally cars handle. If this is degree of authenticity is de rigour for US Gold then we'd like to announce that we've got a sex game in development, if you know what I mean.

Powerdrive is already shaping up to be a 'beaut', as those Aussies would say. The finished game will incorporate over 50 different courses spread over 8 locations throughout the world, including Monte Carlo, Kenya and Australia, amongst others. A colossal amount of work has gone into making the cars look as realistic as possible, with each vehicle utilising up to 36,000 polygons

"Our brief was to develop a game that is above all great fun to play — and that's what we've done," enthuses Stuart Hibbert, Powerdrive's Producer. To achieve this, the team behind the game has gone all-out to make Powerdrive as configurable as possible, so novices and expert racers will be catered for.



You'll be able to race during the day or night, hampered by treacherous weather conditions such as rain and snow, race with either manual or automatic gears, and even select one of six rally cars in which to tackle the courses.

US Gold is hoping to release Powerdrive sometime next month. And we hope they do, too.

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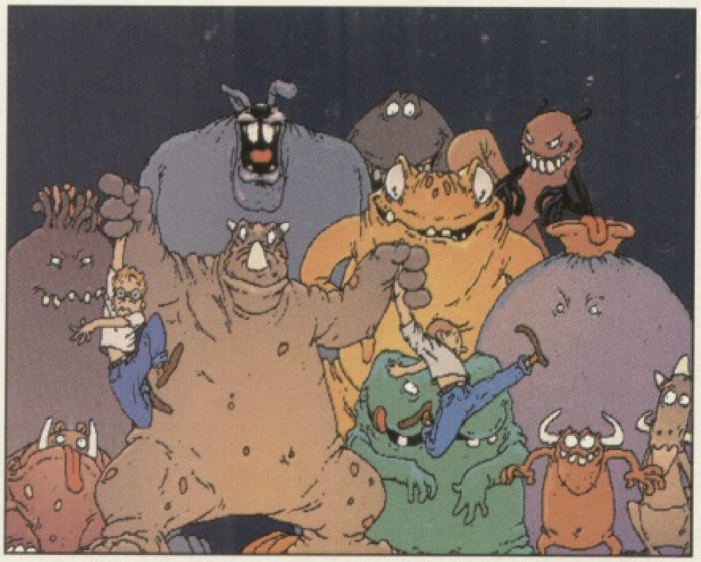
QUALIFYING TIME
4"20.00
COURSE RECORD
3"03.48



Childs' Play

Kids have got it easy, haven't they? For the first year or so of their useless lives they wake you up every night with their incessant screaming, and vomit and dump down your shirt at regular intervals. Then, when they've got slightly more control over their bowels, they embark on a quest for knowledge, so you have to spend all hours of the day reading them stupid books in which the main character goes to the shops, park or somewhere equally earth-shattering.

Thank God for Coktel Vision, then. Its forthcoming Playtoons Collection will mean you'll be able to plonk your kids in front of the PC, slip in a CD and pop off down the pub instead of plodding through the adventures of Janet and John.

Aimed at five- to ten-year-olds, the collection will build over the next two years into ten interactive stories. Children will be encouraged to let their imaginations run wild as they interact with the on-screen characters.

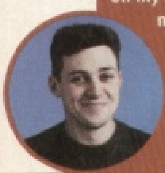
But rather than following a pre-set plot, the Playtoons Collection will allow kids to build their own stories with the characters they've met in any of the previous tales. Any particularly brilliant creations can then be saved and played back at a later date, which no doubt you'll have to watch loads of times whilst pretending to be impressed at your sprog's limited artistic ability.

Team **Talk**

Who are the geezers who write PC GAMES? And just what's taken their fancy this month? All is revealed below...

David Upchurch
Editor

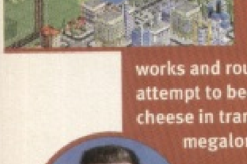
"Magic Carpet was my personal high-flyer this month (geddit?). It quite literally took my breath away — in fact, my lips turned blue and I started slipping into a coma, so Dean, Alex and Dave had to jump up and down on my chest in order to rescuscitate me. I tell you, it's the last time I review a Bullfrog game."



Dean Evans
Assistant Editor

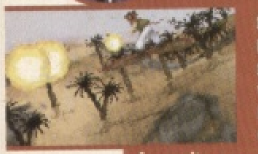
"Yeah, I agree that Magic Carpet is very good, but personally I give my personal 'Game Of The Month' award to Little Big Adventure. It's so cute I nearly puked, and it's just *soooo* playable and entertaining to boot. I can't wait to see what Adeline Software get up to next..."

Alex Fraser
Staff Writer

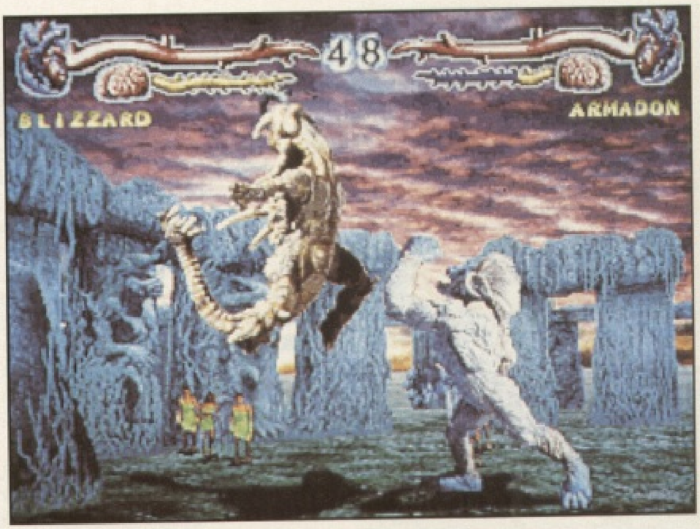


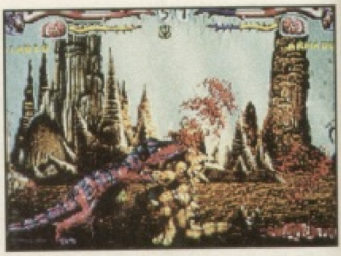
"I know you're going to think me a bit sad, but I reckon that Transport Tycoon is the best game released this month. Building little rail networks and routing busses in an attempt to become the biggest cheese in transport appealed to the megalomaniac in me."

David Kelsall
Art Editor



"I'm a sucker for great graphics and uncomplicated but involving gameplay, and that's what Magic Carpet has got in buckets. One of my all-time favourite games is Lucasfilm Games' Rescue On Fractalus, and Magic Carpet sort of reminded of that at times..."





Rage Hard!

You may be looking forward to Super Street Fighter 2 or Mortal Kombat 2, but in our humble opinion the only beat-'em-up worth waiting for next year is Time-Warner Interactive's Primal Rage.

Okay, we may be a little premature in our judgement (after all, the game isn't set for release until September 1995 at the very earliest), but if its arcade parent is anything to go by, Primal Rage will make all other combat games look positively prehistoric. Actually, that's a pretty good joke, because instead of featuring super-human humans, Primal Rage places you in control of one of a number of ultra-hard dinosaurs. Oh, never mind.

What makes Primal Rage so different from its competitors is the way the graphics have been created. Most beat-'em-ups use normal sprites to portray the on-screen action. Not so Primal Rage. First, each character was rigorously designed on paper so the team behind the game could come up with exactly the right look for each combatant. Then, once the designs were finalised, clay models were constructed and painted, with extra details such as teeth, nails and feathers glued on. These models were then filmed in over 100 different poses which, when played in sequence, gave the impression the beasts were fighting.

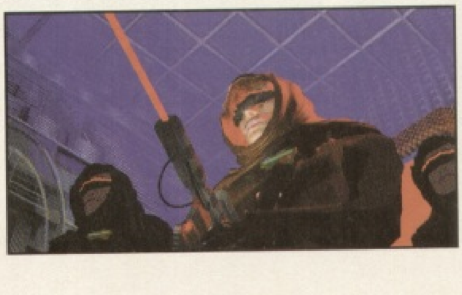
As you can imagine, the use of stop-motion techniques gives the game a very unique style, and if you've an arcade near you then you'll be able to see the game 'in the flesh', as it were. It's still way too early to see how well the translation from coin-op to PC game will go, but you can rest assured that we'll be bringing you as much news as possible between now and next September.

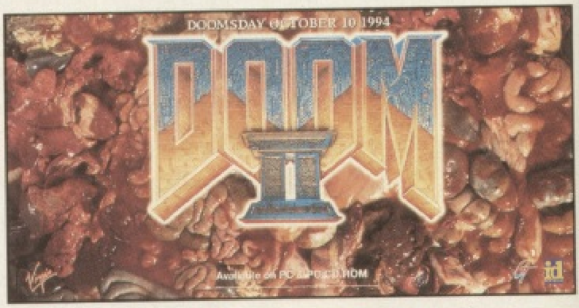
Hell On Earth

We all know politicians are just about the most corrupt individuals alive (yes, allegedly), but who'd have thought that in a few years' time they'll enter into a pact with the devil? GameTek, that's who — for that's the premise of their next CD-ROM release, entitled Hell.

Gideon and Rachel, two former government investigators, have been framed for crimes they didn't commit. And if that wasn't bad enough, their former employers appear to have entered into a pact with the devil, who's very kindly lent them Hell's front door key. What follows is a 'Cyberpunk thriller', in which the duo must battle to uncover and reveal the truth, even if it does mean battling with Satan himself.

Hell promises plenty of hot action (sorry), presented with lavish 3D-rendered graphics and animations which bring the supernatural high-tech horrors to life. Find out whether this is a winning combination in our review next month.





Not All Doom **And Gloom**

Doomsday, October 10th, was being hailed as a success by Virgin as it revealed that over 100,000 units had been shipped out on the first day of sale. The game was backed by an extensive media campaign in the computer mags (us included, thank God), as well as a controversial billboard advert which depicted the Doom II logo over a backdrop of animal offal. Charming.

MPs and parental concern groups alike voiced their concern at the violence within the game, which is the first piece of software to be released with an '18' rating from ELSPA.

Conservative MP John Whittingdale said: "I'm unconvinced that there is a need for this kind of game. As computer games get more and more realistic, the whole issue of monitoring them, through legislation or whatever, needs to be looked into again."

Jackie Miller, Deputy General Secretary of the Professional Association Of Teachers, was more vocal: "Doom 2 is thoroughly nasty — precisely the kind of thing that we've been worried about."

Dominik Diamond, spokesperson of a generation, was typically subtle. "It's the dog's bo**ocks!" he enthused.

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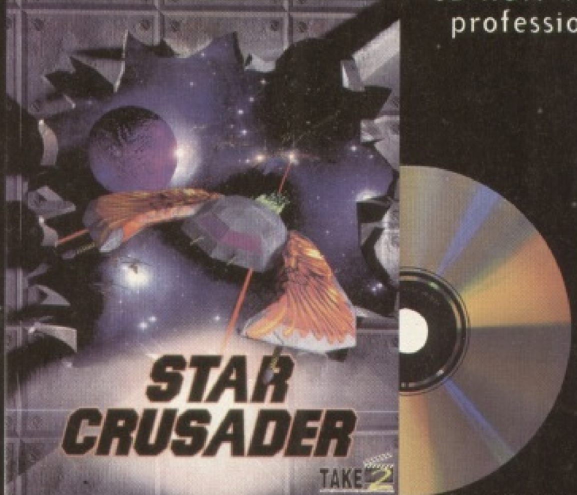
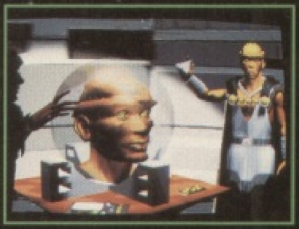
- Driving music, searing sound effects and, on the CD-ROM version, fully digitized speech delivered by professional actors.





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Chris Sawyer

IN MOTION MICROPROSE

The Next Big Thing?

With games like Wing Commander 3 and Ecstatica on the horizon, *what does the future hold for the PC game?* Dean Evans sits down in a darkened room to speculate...

Let me ask you a question. What do you think is going to be the next *big* thing on the PC? Is it going to be the CD game? How about Interactive Movies packed to the brim with Full-Motion Video and 3D Studio-rendered bad guys? Or are we going to shut ourselves away with heavy hats, clamp small TV screens over our eyes and go all 'virtual'?

Well, first of all, let's casually dismiss the CD game. Although we've seen some digital corkers in the office this month — Magic Carpet and Little Big Adventure to name but two, a shiny CD-ROM disc isn't an exciting new standard. It doesn't make games any different — it just stores them in a different way.

Jez San of Argonaut Software agrees. Quoted in a recent interview, he said: "A game is a game regardless of the medium you put it on. If you have to ship a game on 20 floppies, you may as well put it on CD because it's cheaper. But why should the game be any different? You don't have to fill the CD to do a good game — it's just a medium."

And while we're at it, let's dismiss Full-Motion Video and the much vaunted Interactive Movie as well. As I've said before, the inclusion of FMV in computer games can only ever be cosmetic. Video is a passive experience. You don't interact with it, you sit and *watch* it. Hopefully, your average gamesplayer wants a bit more excitement and a bit more imagination than 45 minutes of very pretty TV-quality footage and a couple of "Yes/No", "Er, I'll go left this time" decisions.

"If you're in the mood to sit back and watch a story unfold, then you can watch a movie," says Randy Komisar, President of LucasArts. "Or maybe you want to engage your imagination in a first-person experience. In that case you play a game. We watch movies and we play games and therein lies the difference between film and interactive entertainment."

So, I suppose that leaves Virtual Reality. Of course, this is a prime candidate for The Next Big Thing and tomorrow's new gadget, but until the price of the leading VR helmets drops to an affordable level, let's say somewhere around the £300 mark, it's going to be a gaming luxury that few people can afford.

No. Let's forget about Full-Motion Video and Virtual Reality for a while. The Next Big Thing might well be something a lot simpler and closer to home — Super VGA. As processing power improves, game designers will be able to shift around high-resolution objects in real-time with no jerkiness or visible time delay whatsoever. Give it another month or so and you'll be able to play games like US Navy Fighters, Little Big Adventure and the stunning-looking Wing Commander 3.

Okay, in essence US Navy Fighters doesn't have anything radically new to offer — it's just another carrier-based flight sim. Little Big Adventure is a traditional isometric-3D adventure, nothing new there, while Wing 3, although dazzlingly brilliant to goggle at, has the same ingredients as Wings 1 and 2 did but has a full-motion Mark Hamill in it. The major difference is the way that they *look*. Say goodbye to bog-standard VGA, Super VGA has finally arrived as a force to be reckoned with.

Super-Duper VGA

Despite the fact that you probably have an SVGA-compatible card sitting quietly in your PC, up until now very few software developers have taken advantage of it. Games like TIE Fighter, Inferno and Doom all run in bog-standard, run-of-the-mill VGA, with a maximum screen resolution of 320x200 pixels.

Yes, they all look very nice but, the chances are that if you bought your PC within the last year and a half, your machine should have no problems displaying a staggeringly smooth 800x600 pixels. That's over double what you're currently used to.

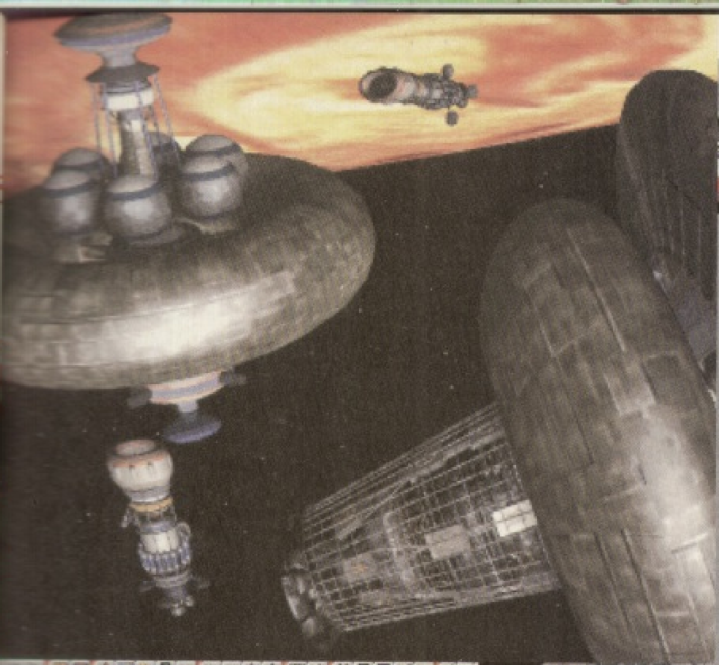
And this, PC people, is Super VGA. The SVGA standard covers a variety of resolutions ranging from 640x480 to 800x600 to 1024x768 and finally up to a massive 1280x1024. In fact, the resolution your machine can display is only limited by the graphics card you have installed in your PC and, if you're curious, you can check out how versatile your particular card is by fiddling with your Windows 3.1 drivers.

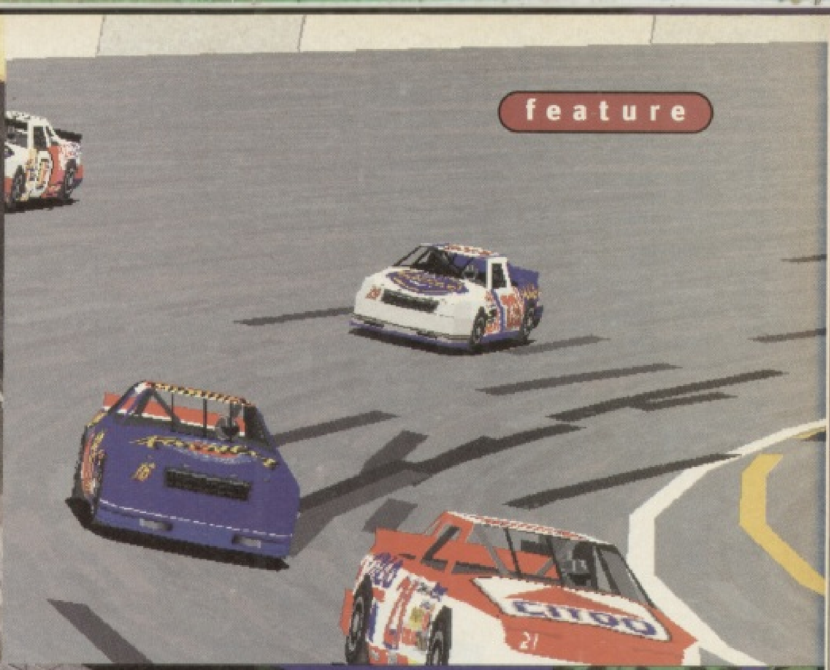
You see, there's absolutely no reason why you can't display your Windows Main screen in a resolution of 1024x786 if you have the correct card and software drivers. It may be a bit hard on the eye, but it's fairly impressive nonetheless.

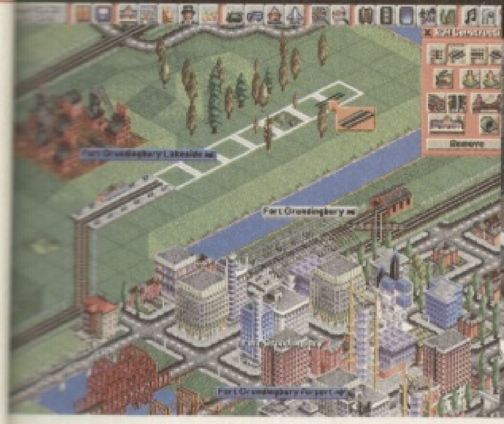
So if, say, 60% of people have a modern(ish) video card that has at least 1Mb of video memory and is perfectly capable of shifting objects around lavish 800x600 backgrounds in 256 colours, why do games developers still program in 320x200? Surely they can do better than this?

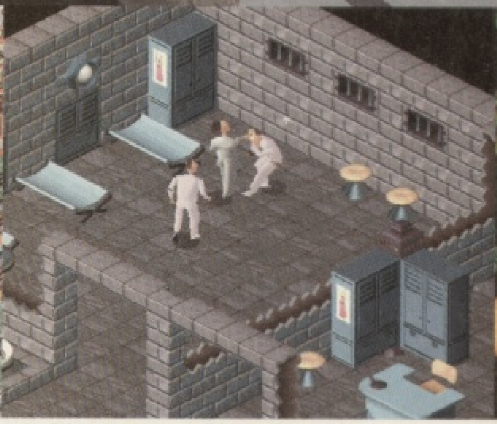
The next generation of super

Rise Of The Robots from Mirage Software uses ray-traced, Gouraud shaded SVGA graphics to jazz up what is essentially little more than a StreetFighter-style beat-'em-up. The detail isn't great enough to warrant a monster machine, but it does look very nice indeed.

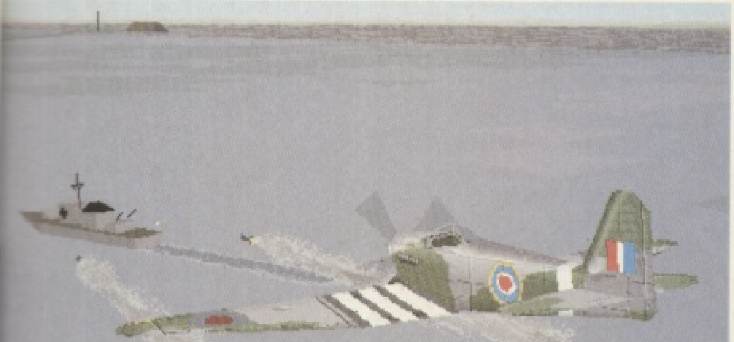








Like Sim City 2000, Outpost (above) uses impressive high-res graphics to create a game about building a space colony, while NASCAR Racing from Virgin takes the IndyCar Racing 3D engine and almost doubles the screen resolution. Transport Tycoon uses SVGA to great effect to simulate towns and villages, complete with tiny buses, planes and trains, and Little Big Adventure uses SVGA to create the best-looking adventure game that we've ever seen.
(Below) Rowan Software's impressive flight simulation, Overlord, shows that what can be achieved with 640x480 SVGA polygons. Oooh!



consoles are streets ahead — the 3DO has a graphic resolution of 786x560, the Atari Jaguar displays 720x576 and each of these machines can display up to 16.7 million colours to boot. It's very impressive stuff, and why, when 3DO owners can play games like John Madden's Football, Road Rash and FIFA Soccer, we have to settle for rough-edged platformers, blocky flight sims and EGA-style strategy games is beyond me.

To be fair, things are starting to change. Little Big Adventure is the smoothest, best-looking adventure game that I've seen this year; Rowan Software's Overlord and Dawn Patrol, its forthcoming World War One flight sim, both have a stunning SVGA option; Sim City 2000 and Transport Tycoon run only in SVGA; while games like Sierra's Outpost, NASCAR Racing, the upcoming TFX 2 and, of course, Origin's Wing Commander 3, show off just what is possible when the PC screen resolution is jacked up to the next level. But why aren't there more?

The answer, it seems, is relatively simple. Everybody (well, almost everybody) has a VGA-compatible video card of some description in their PC and this obviously means that if a software developer programs a game in VGA, all the PCs that can display VGA will be able to run it.

Obviously, this is a very simplistic view and it doesn't take into account memory problems and soundcard quirks, but if you imagine that 90% of PCs have a some sort of VGA-compatible graphics card hidden away in their innards, this is a massively huge market that the games companies are selling to.

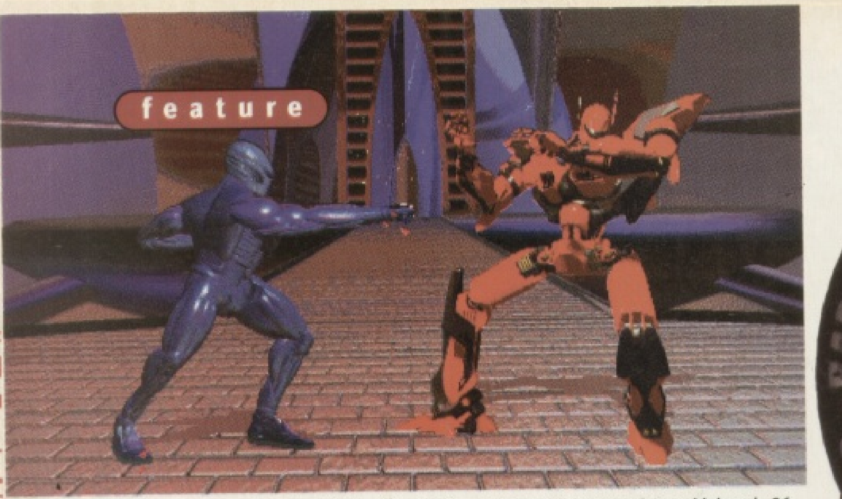
But the main problem with SVGA is that there is no universal graphics standard. There are are lots of companies that manufacture video cards and therefore lots of individual standards and software drivers specifically to operate with those standards. For example, when Maxis produced Sim City 2000, it solved this dilemma by including most of the popular SVGA drivers in the game. But this is a lot of work and there's still always the possibility that your particular graphics card is the only one that isn't supported.

VESA, which stands for Video Electronic Standards Association, is the closest to a set standard so far, and consists of a group of major graphics card manufacturers who have determined standards for high-res monitors and graphics adapters. It's very commendable, but the VESA group doesn't yet include all the possible card makers. So, even if a game has a VESA emulation, there's still a chance that some obscure VGA/SVGA cards won't run with a particular game.

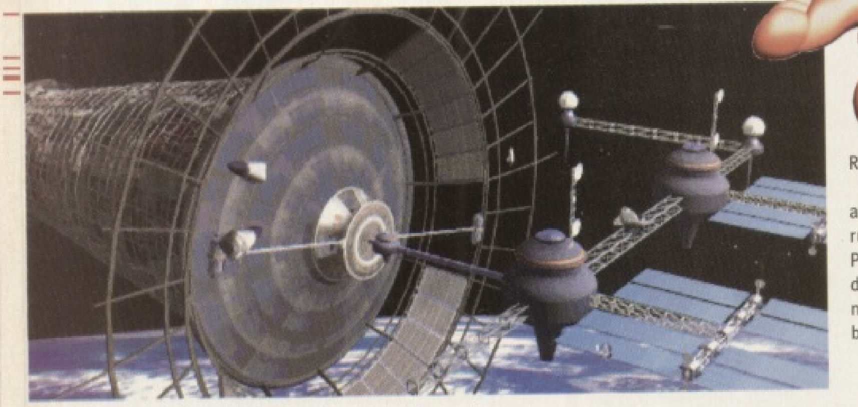
Another big problem is speed. Shunting lower resolution graphics around a screen is far easier than moving objects in 640x480 or 800x600. Even with an expensive, top-of-the-range video card, you're still reliant on the efficiency of the game code and the speed of your machine's processor. If you've got a brand-spanking new 90MHz Pentium PC then you've got nothing to worry about, but if your machine packs a little less oomph in the processor department, words like 'chug' and 'jerky' will suddenly start to become very apt indeed.

I've Got The Power!

So if Super VGA games are going to be The Next Big Thing, what can you do to bring your machine up to speed? Well, you could always splash out on a completely new one, and although this is a very drastic (and bloody expensive — Dave) course of action, if you're still persevering with a 386-based machine, when games like



Is SVGA The Next Big Thing? If it is, it looks like you're going to need at least a high-end 486 PC to get a decent game. Oh dear, it looks like I'm going to have to upgrade my PC again...



RADIALS
KONG

Wing Commander 3 and US Navy Fighters appear, they're going to run about as fast on a 386 as a dozing snail.

But if a new machine is a bit out of your reach, and if you've got a slow(ish) 486, you might want to consider upgrading your processor to either a DX2, a DX4 or even one of the imminent P24T Pentium upgrade processors — fortunately, Dr Spanner will be looking at upgrading your processor in next month's issue. Although all the talk these days is of how good games on the Pentium look — and after playing Magic Carpet on a 33MHz 486 and then a 60MHz Pentium, I'm forced to agree — a 66MHz 486 or a DX2 flavoured PC will be more than adequate for jerk and flicker-free gamesplaying.

As I've mentioned, it's still early days as far as SVGA gaming is concerned and very few games actually make full use of these higher resolutions. But this is not always going to be the case, and if your VGA card is about as bog-standard as a VGA card can possibly be, then you might want to consider investing in one of the new-fangled graphics accelerators.

Although only really effective when running under Windows, a graphics accelerator, like the Kelvin 64 from Orchid, offers these higher resolutions and has up to 2Mb of dedicated Video Ram (VRAM) to redraw the screen. In fact, the Kelvin 64, a 64-Bit accelerator card, can support 640x480 and 800x600 modes in 16.8 million colours, 1024x768 in 65,536 colours and the big 1280x1024 mode in 256 colours. At under £200, it's enough to take your breath away.

Speeding up DOS-based programs, however, is another matter entirely and, if SVGA should establish itself as the new standard for PC games and you haven't got a fast machine (i.e. a Pentium or a DX2), you'll be left behind faster than Damon Hill racing Michael Schumacher. There is a faint glimmer of hope, however, with the anticipated launch of Argonaut's impressive BRender card, a dedicated polygon generator chip. But whether there will be an avalanche of games that support it and make full use of its powerful features is as yet unknown.

The Donkey Kong Country Factor

There's no denying that the SVGA games that I've seen look absolutely gorgeous, even if the gameplay hasn't really changed. But games designers seem to be in such a rush to push the technological envelope. They seem interested only in developing for the more powerful machines (like the Pentium and the DX2) and ignoring the less powerful ones (the 386 and the 486SX range). I'm sure it doesn't have to be like this.

Donkey Kong Country on the Super Nintendo is a good example of what I'm talking about. You see, while console designers are literally falling over themselves to make games for the Nintendo Ultra 64, the Sony Playstation, the 3DO and the Atari Jaguar, they are overlooking the current platforms like the MegaDrive and the SNES, thinking that they are defunct and that nothing new or exciting can be done with them. I mean, if you've got a choice of programming a 16-bit SNES game or a 32-bit 3DO game, chances are the 3DO project would allow you to have more flashy graphics, longer intro sequences and all the digitised speech and samples that you could possibly need.

Donkey Kong Country has proved them wrong. Just when people thought that you couldn't do anything more with the SNES, DKC has blown that argument away. Whatever you think of the game (and it's a platform game), the rendered graphics are so amazing that you automatically think that it must be running on something else that is hidden away round the corner. Not so. Just as Ultimate Play The Game produced ground-breaking games on the 48K Spectrum back in the early 80s, Ultimate (now called Rare) has done it again on the SNES with DKC.

Rare has proved that you can still squeeze the best out of an an old machine, and on the PC a game like Overlord proves that you don't have to have a Pentium to run an SVGA game at a decent speed. As much as I like the idea of owning a Pentium PC and of playing Wing 3 and Magic Carpet until my eyes pop out, PC developers don't want to fall into the same trap as their console counterparts. It's not as if we can just shell out £300 for a new machine. A new Pentium will set you back a cool £1,000+

So *is* SVGA The Next Big Thing?

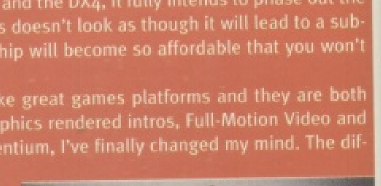
It certainly looks like it — and if Wing 3, US Navy Fighters and LBA are an indication of what lies ahead, then PC games are just going to get better and better. Your current machine may well end up being too slow to run some of next year's monster releases, but in the meantime, if anybody tries to convince you to get a 'Super Console', just show them what the PC has to offer and see the smile drain away from their faces. I have seen the future — and it's 640x480 in 65,536 colours.

Pentium *Power!*

Intel is marketing its next generation processor, the Pentium, very aggressively and, with its mid-range chips the DX2 and the DX4, it fully intends to phase out the slower 486 CPUs. Sadly, however, this doesn't look as though it will lead to a sub-£400 33MHz 486, because the DX2 chip will become so affordable that you won't need to bother.

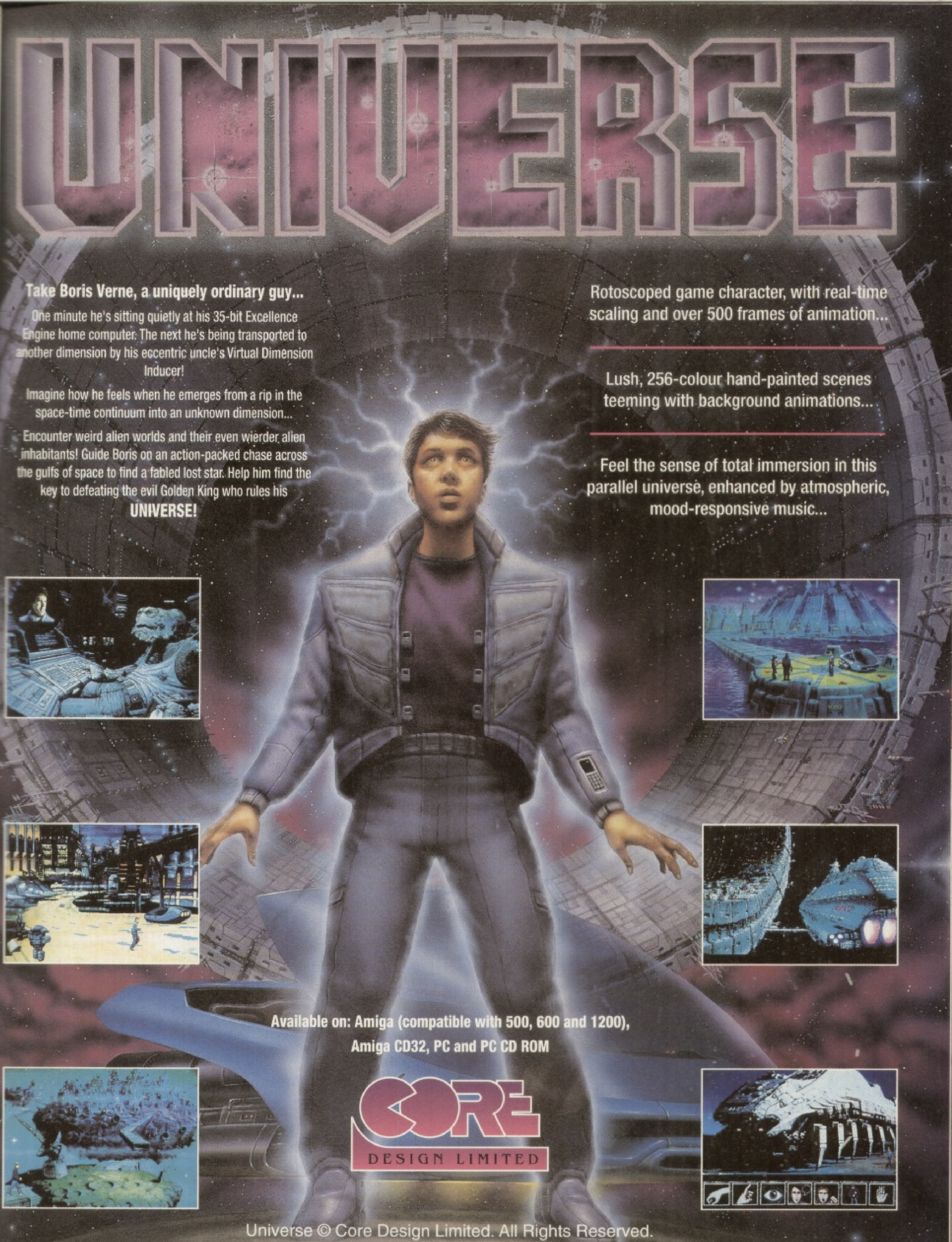
The DX2 and indeed the DX4 make great games platforms and they are both ideal for games that have Silicon Graphics rendered intros, Full-Motion Video and high-res SVGA graphics. As for the Pentium, I've finally changed my mind. The difference in performance between a 66MHz 486 and a 60MHz Pentium is phenomenal — and now that I've played Magic Carpet and Inferno on it, I never want to go back to my slow 33MHz 486 again.

And this is the same for SVGA games. Once you've played a game in SVGA, playing it again in normal VGA is something of a let-down. Progress definitely has its drawbacks, but in the end it's going to be worth it.



Contacts!

- Kelvin 64 Graphics Accelerator; RRP £149 (1Mb VRAM), £199 (2Mb VRAM). Call Orchid Europe on (0256) 479898.
- For more information about Little Big Adventure, US Navy Fighters and Wing Commander 3, contact EA on (0753) 549442.
- For more information about Overlord or NASCAR Racing contact Virgin on (081) 960 2255; about Dawn Patrol contact Empire on (081) 343 7337; about Transport Tycoon contact MicroProse on (0454) 326532.



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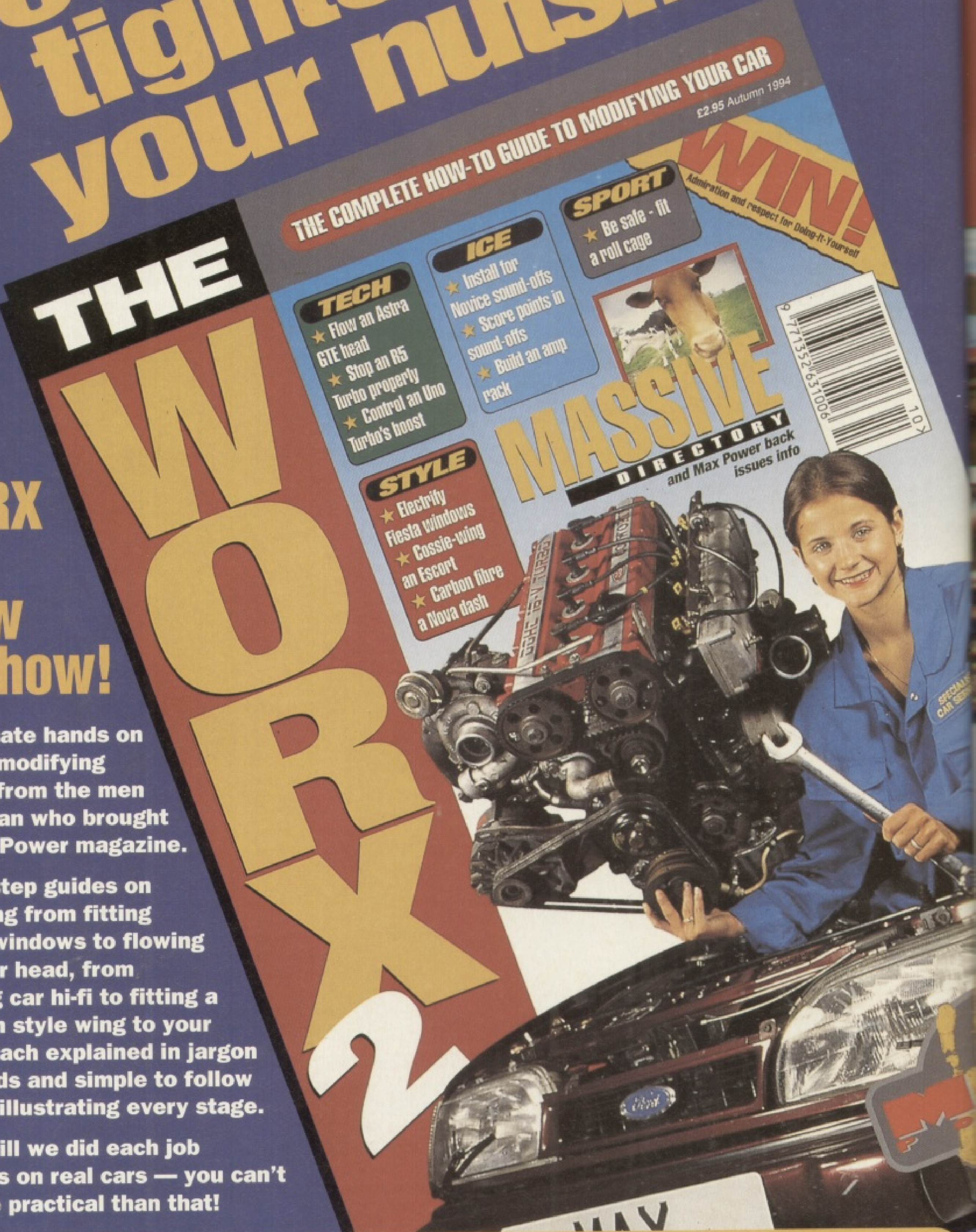
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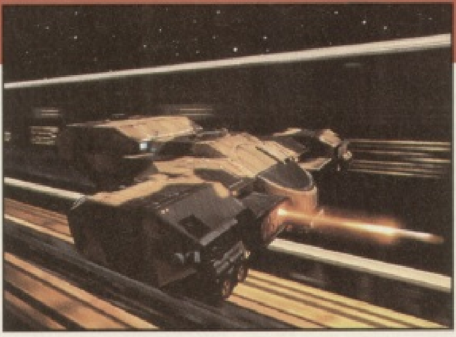
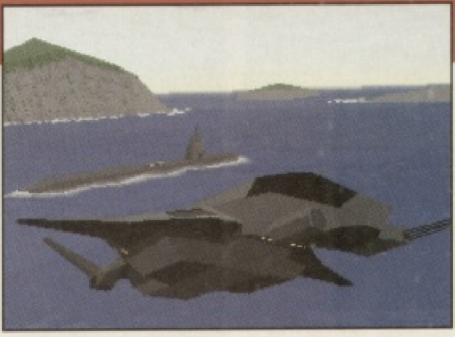
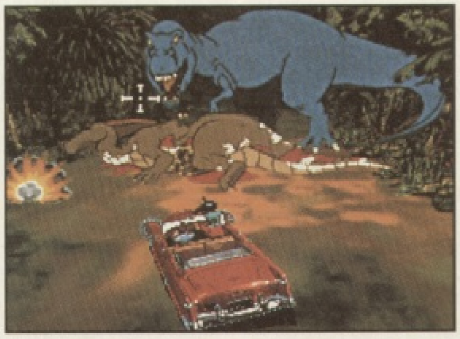
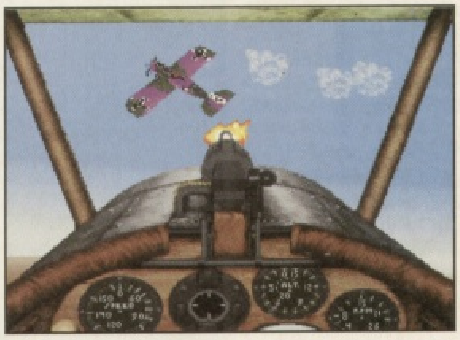
previews

Some people whinge on about games not being as good as they used to be. (Er, I think you're talking about us, actually — Dave.) But you need only take a look at all this stuff waiting in the the wings to disprove that theory...









Rocket Science.......30

According to Brian Moriarty, he and his fellow gaming gods at Rocket Science in the United States have been compared to the rock group Cream. Not, I hasten to add, because they're a bunch of geriatric old rock stars but rather because they're what you might call a 'Superteam'.

You see, the founders of Rocket Science have brought together major talents from both Silicon Valley and Hollywood in the hope of finally turning the 'Interactive Movie' dream into reality. And as their first two titles — LoadStar and Cadillacs & Dinosaurs — indicate, they just might have done it. David Upchurch brings you this live, on-the-spot report...

King's Quest VII.......36

This, the latest in Sierra's venerable King's Quest series of adventures, is groan-inducingly sub-titled The Prince-less Bride. So, as you might guess, it stars a beautiful princess searching for a handsome prince to marry. However, what makes this addition to the epic King's Quest saga stand out is its stunning Disney cartoon-quality graphics. Our resident 'Looney Toon' Dean Evans reveals all...

Discworld.......38

Based on the comic writings of Terry Pratchett and utilising the vocal talents of Eric Idle, John Pertwee and Tony Robinson, Psyggy's Discworld is shaping up to be the game that could finally knock LucasArts from the top of the graphic adventuring tree. Alex Fraser hops aboard the giant turtle A'tuin to take look...

Wings Of Glory.......40

Following on from Strike Commander and Pacific Strike, Origin step even further back into aviating history to bring you their latest texture-mapped, Gouraud-shaded flight sim. The game is set during World War One, at the very dawn of aerial warfare, and promises to be a doozy — provided you've got the right hardware to run it! Dean Evans warms up his Pentium in readiness...

Chopper.......42

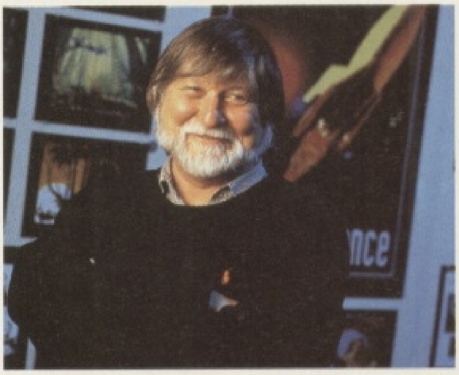
Don't snigger — this is the in-house working title for Digital Image Design's new futuristic helicopter flight sim. You see, so EXCLUSIVELY early is this sneak preview, that they haven't even thought of a proper name for it yet. Oh, and remember — you saw it here first!

The Appliance

You might not know who or what Rocket Science is, but it's a certainty that you will soon. In brief, Rocket Science is a games development team — but one boasting the most incredible array of talent ever assembled. David Upchurch kneels down before them, crying "I'm not worthy, I'm not worthy..."

GAME	LOADSTAR/CADILLACS & DINOSAURS
PUBLISHER	BMG INTERACTIVE ENTERTAINMENT
DEVELOPER	ROCKET SCIENCE
WORK *STARTED*	AUGUST 1993
DUE FOR *COMPLETION*	CHRISTMAS 1994

(Top left) Brian Moriarty, the legend behind games such as Loom and Wishbringer, is one of Rocket Science's two Senior Games Designers.



(Left) Ron Cobb is one of Rocket Science's four founders, and is probably best known for his work in the film industry. In the past he's worked on movies such as Alien and Bladerunner.

"At Rocket Science we have sort of like a 'superteam' — you know, we've been compared to the rock group Cream. Basically, the founders' philosophy was 'Let's not fool around here — let's go out and hire the best that we can find.' It was expensive, but the results are there."

So speaks Brian Moriarty, one of two Senior Games Designers at Rocket Science, a new software development team based in California which was formed in the July of last year.

But so what? New software developers pop up all the time claiming to be the next big thing. So why is PC GAMES devoting four pages to covering the first two games from an unknown software developer? Why? Because Moriarty's not being arrogant when he refers to Rocket Science as a 'superteam' — the company employs an array of talent that most companies would give their corporate right arm for.

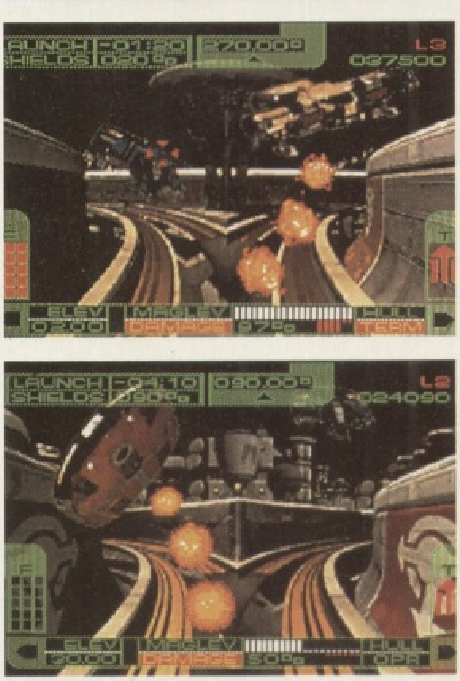
Moriarty, for example, was the man behind classic games such as Loom, Beyond Zork, Trinity and Wishbringer, while his fellow Senior Games Designer is David Fox, who was responsible for Indiana Jones And The Last Crusade, Zak McKracken And The Alien Mindbenders and Rescue On Fractalus.

And among Rocket Sciences fifty or so other employees are key players from companies such as Industrial Light & Magic, Amblin Entertainment, LucasArts, Marvel Comics, General Magic, 3DO, Apple and SuperMac Technology. One thing's for sure — with people like these on-board, Rocket Science could never be accused of 'fooling around'.

"What the people here are trying to do is turn the Silicon Valley meets Hollywood 'thing' into a reality," claims Moriarty. "There's been a lot of talk about it, but there haven't been too many actual efforts to bring people from both disciplines into one company.

"Rocket Science literally started out with two people from Silicon Valley and two from Hollywood: it was founded by Steve Blank and Peter Barrett, both from the computer world, and Ron Cobb, the production designer, and Mike Backes, who's a screenwriter."

The 'Hollywood influence' can be clearly seen in Rocket Science's two debut games: LoadStar: The Legend Of Tully Bodine, a sci-fi shoot-'em-up based on an original idea by Ron Cobb himself, and Cadillacs &



(Above) LoadStar in action. On a fast 486 the whole 256-colour screen is animated at a rate of 24 frames per second — that's a pretty impressive achievement. Note the branches in the trackways.

Of Science

LoadStar boasts special effects sequences during its 'movie' sections that are just as good as anything seen in, say, Star Trek: The Next Generation.

Dinosaurs: The Second Cataclysm, a fantasy... er... shoot-'em-up based on the popular graphic novels by Mark Schultz.

"The first games that we're doing are, in terms of game design, fairly traditional driving/shooting games," says Moriarty. "But the look of the games is quite a bit different. In LoadStar, for instance, for the first time in a game like this it actually looks as if you're playing in a movie, as opposed to playing a video game where all the things you're shooting at look 'pasted in'.

"What we're looking for is a very high level of realism. I think the appearance of these games will startle people — we've really gone to great lengths to make not just the non—interactive narrative sections, but also the actual gameplay itself look just like a movie.

"And there are very nice transitions between the two. In a lot of games the movie segments seem like an afterthought or they look totally different to the gameplay experience, whereas during the course of LoadStar we freely intercut between the movie stuff and the game."

LoadStar is, as you can probably tell, the project that Moriarty is working on. It's quite a departure from his earlier, more adventure-orientated games... "Oh, completely," agrees Moriarty. "I've never done an arcade game before. But the adventure game market, although interesting, is quite small compared to the market we're aiming for with these games. I mean, one of the reasons we did this is to make a great deal of money and retire early. You know, greed is a highly motivating thing!"

(Above top and bottom) LoadStar employs the acting talents of Barry Primus as Tully Bodine and Ned Beatty as the lunar Sheriff. "Ned Beatty is amazing — I mean, when you want a sheriff who else do you get? No-one else does sheriffs like Ned. He just stepped into the role," says Moriarty.

Well, at least he's honest! As I mentioned earlier, the game is based on an idea by Ron Cobb, one of Rocket Science's founders and a legendary conceptual artist and production designer who has worked on movies such as Alien, Bladerunner, The Abyss and Conan The Barbarian, to name but a few.

"Around about the time Star Wars came out in the late 70s, there was a big craze going on with Citizen's Band radio," explains Moriarty. "Everybody had to have a CB radio, and there were a lot of CB movies coming out, most notably Smokey And The Bandit. And Ron thought that it would be good to take the two big movies of that time, Star Wars and Smokey And The Bandit, and combine them.

"So he came up with this concept for a movie that was basically about a 'space trucker'. So he started to develop a screenplay and the person he had in mind to play the lead character was John Wayne. Then a couple of bad things happened — the CB craze died, and then The Duke died, so that kind of put a stop to that

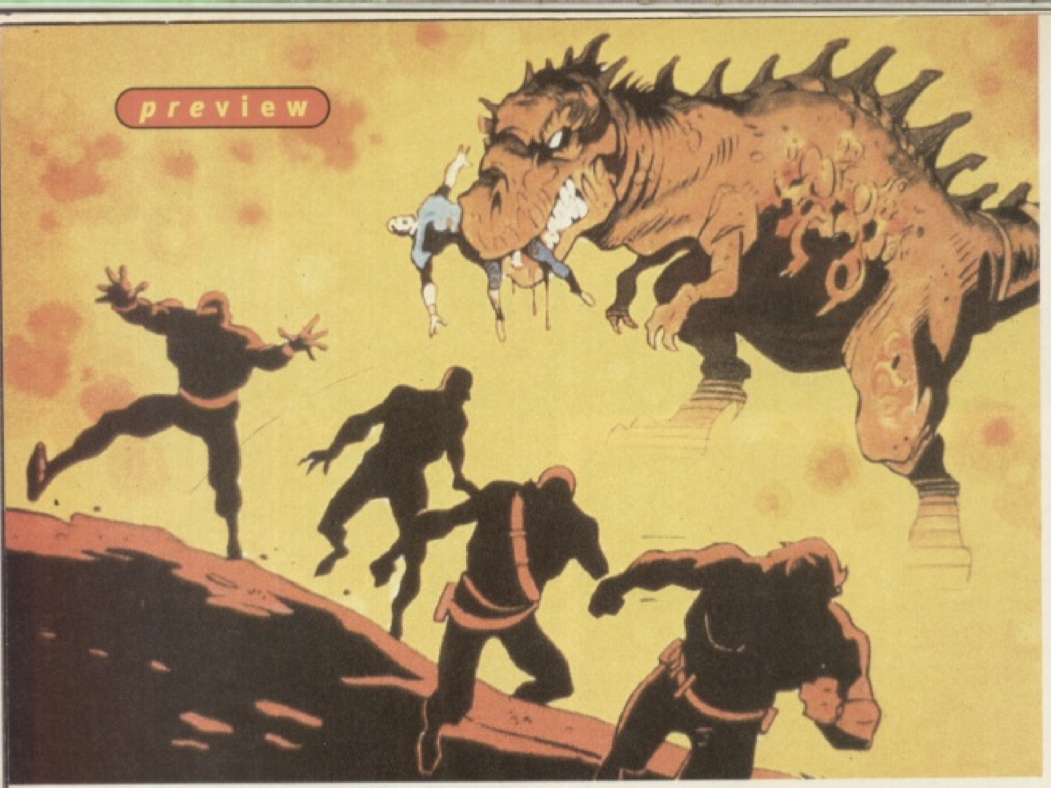
"Then, last September, just after I got hired, I went down to Hollywood to meet Ron. We were going through piles of his stuff looking for ideas, when he brings out this picture of a big, weird-looking spaceship and says 'Oh, here's this space truck I designed for a movie'.

> "What the people here are trying to do is turn the Silicon Valley meets Hollywood 'thing' into a reality."
>
> Brian Moriarty,
> Designer of LoadStar.

"So we're admiring it, and he starts telling me about his idea for LoadStar, and I thought 'Well, maybe this would make a good game'. So then we looked at the fragments of the screenplay he had, and we took elements from them which would be suitable for an action game treatment and came up with the design for a trilogy of games."

LoadStar, the first instalment in this trilogy, tells the tale of Tully Bodine, a world-weary space trucker, who accidentally picks up a cargo of illegal contraband while on the Moon. The local police, of course, aren't too happy about this and set out to track him down.

The scene is thus set for an exciting and visually stunning 3D blast, as Tully races his truck around the magnetic trackways criss-crossing the lunar surface, zapping police drones and rival truckers, in a desperate attempt to find the launchpad that'll get him and his cargo off-world and into space.



(Left) Cadillacs & Dinosaurs: The Second Cataclysm (to give the game its full title) is set in a futuristic fantasy world where man meets dinosaur in the Xenozoic Age. The game is based on the graphic novels by Mark Schultz, and he's been sent the game for approval at several points during its development, to make sure that everything in it is in keeping with his 'world view'.

(Below) All of LoadStar's graphics have been generated at very high-resolutions, to make porting them onto future platforms, like the Sony Playstation, an easier task.

In many ways LoadStar's gameplay is very reminiscent of Microcosm. Like the Psygnosis game, the 3D scenery is essentially an animation pulled off CD and your movement is restricted to the trackways. However, you have a certain amount of freedom in that you can take any turnings that present themselves and essentially choose your own route to your destination.

"It's really classic stuff," admits Moriarty, "but it has some differences from other games like it you may have seen. For example — and this may sound trivial but in fact it's fairly revolutionary — you steer by looking out of the window, as opposed to looking at little indicators. You have to actually look for landmarks in the distance and steer towards them.

"And the design of this maze that you're driving in is — again, unlike other games, where it's a fraud and you're not actually driving in a real space — is a real virtual space: you can drive in circles, or you can drive out somewhere and then follow the same route back to where you started from. It's a real place — it's laid out like the real base would be. It's all rational and it all makes sense. There's no restriction to where you can go — if you see a turn that you can take, you can take it. There are no glitches — it's very nice, seamless branching video."

"I think we're seeing new images in Cadillacs & Dinosaurs — you haven't seen this before, it's totally fresh and totally different."

David Brownstein,
Producer of Cadillacs & Dinosaurs.

He's right — it is very nice. For one thing, everything about the game looks right — the spaceships all look realistic and functional, which is one of the things Ron Cobb specialises in:

"Every bolt has a purpose — Ron doesn't put things in for gratuitous reasons, ever," says Moriarty. "I mean, he can explain to you exactly why something is shaped that way, how it turns when it does this, why that's here and that's there — its all very rational. Nothing looks false. It all makes sense. It all feels 'complete'. You could really be there, you know?"

Intercut with the blasting action are several narrative movie sequences, all of which are performed by 'real' actors, most notably Ned Beatty. "The live action shoot took place over three days — but those are three long days, with expensive overtime," says Moriarty. "In a lot of games now they have live actors performing against a blue screen and then they put in some cheesy computer-generated background. Boy, do I hate that! They never do it right — the backgrounds are always done by amateurs and the actors never look right. In LoadStar, save for a couple of exceptions, all of our sets are real, because you can't get that look any other way."

LoadStar also boasts several major special effects sequences, of which Moriarty is particularly proud. "The LoadStar stuff is as good as anything being done for television broadcast," he reckons. "It's as good as anything in The Next Generation or anything like that. Of course, it costs more to do, but when our competitors see it they're going to realise we've upped the ante. You know, that kind of programmer—y, amateurish stuff you see in a lot of games just isn't going to hold up any more."

Technically, LoadStar is impressive. On a 486 with a double-speed CD drive, the game can update the whole screen at a blisteringly smooth 24 frames/second. And there's no annoying pause when you branch off down a tunnel or the game cuts to a narrative movie segment — it is, as Moriarty says, seamless.

Part of the reason for this is Rocket Science's proprietary game development system which they call Game Science. In a nutshell it allows the designers to create game plans on computer, and once video has been assigned to each element of the plan, the system then compiles it onto the final CD, working out the optimum position for each video clip so that the seek time is minimised.

"It's very subtle and sophisticated how it does that," says Moriarty, "but as a result, with correct game design, we're able to get over 90% efficiency in the number of times a piece of video has to be laid out. Typically in games like this you have to take a piece of video and put it down many times on the disc and, of course, that eats up disc space. It's fairly easy to describe, but it's very tricky to pull off. It's basically knowing what's coming and being ready for it."

Moriarty is quite clear what his proudest achievement with LoadStar is — getting the game ready in time for its Christmas release. "We built this game in a year — which, as anybody from any other established company would tell you, is hard enough," he says. "But at the same time we built the company from nothing! No building, nothing! And now we have a game out just a year later, which is an amazing thing.

"But getting it done in the amount of time we had was real tricky. It required an immense amount of organisation. We had over a dozen major special effects shots, and we had to get them right first time, because if we didn't there wasn't the time or the money to replace them with something else."

Cadillacs & Dinosaurs is Rocket Science's other big title in the pipeline, and is based on the popular graphic novels by Mark Schultz.

"We were fans of the graphic novels and thought that they'd be a great departure point for a game," explains David Brownstein, the game's Producer. "We wanted to do something that was very different looking to LoadStar. We wanted to make use of a cartoon style — not a Saturday morning cartoon style, but a more adult—orientated style."

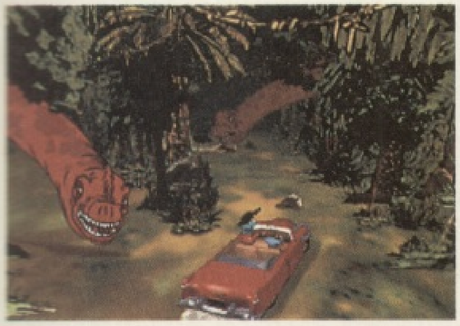
You may wonder what Cadillacs and dinosaurs are doing together — I know I did. Apparently, so the story goes, Mother Earth got so fed up with man and his polluting ways that she decided to destroy him with vast volcanic upheavals and earthquakes. Luckily, however, a few people managed to scurry to the safety of underground bunkers.

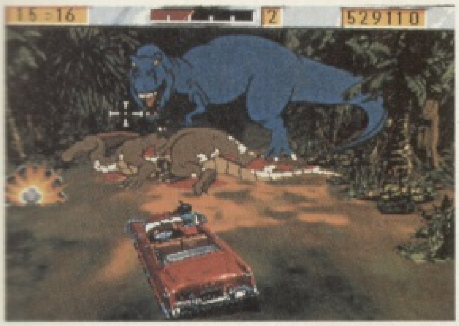
But when these survivors clambered back into the daylight many years later they found dinosaurs once

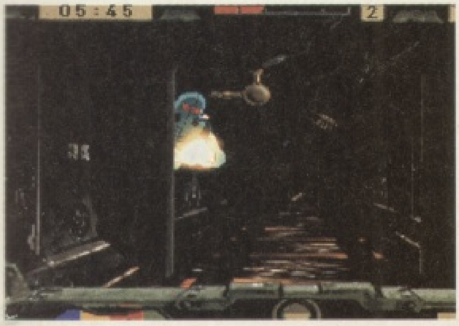
> "At Rocket Science we have sort of like a 'superteam' — you know, we've been compared to the rock group Cream."
>
> Brian Moriarty,
> Designer of LoadStar.

again roaming the Earth. They also found remnants of the 'old' civilisation, such as Cadillacs. So there you have it — Cadillacs and... er... dinosaurs. I think that explains everything. "It could happen, really!" exclaims Brownstein, unconvincingly.

In the game you play Jack 'Cadillac' Tenrec and his partner Hannah Dundee as they drive around this strange new world in their red Caddy, battling evil poachers and a mad woman who plans to breed mutant dinosaurs. "It's sort of a 'politically correct' game," says Brownstein, "in that you're not supposed to shoot the dinosaurs, you're supposed to preserve them — in fact, you lose points if you shoot them."







(Above) In Cadillacs & Dinosaurs the player has more freedom of movement than in LoadStar, but they're both essentially driving/shooting games.

(Right) Cadillacs & Dinosaurs' attractive intro and its cutscenes are animated using a similar technique to the in-game graphics.

In some respects it's very much like LoadStar, i.e. streamed video pulled off CD which allows you to 'branch off' at certain points. However, the car also has total freedom to move around the track — which is pretty handy, as there are loads of obstacles that have to be avoided.

"You have to steer the car and make turning decisions too," adds Brownstein. "So you could be on the left side of the screen and there will be a turning on the right, but you'll not be able to get over to it in time. So it's really like driving — you have to dodge obstacles and navigate."

Cadillacs & Dinosaurs also differs from LoadStar in that it can be played simultaneously by two people. Brownstein explains: "As there are two characters in the car — Jack, who's driving, and Hannah, who's sitting in the passenger seat and is armed with a rifle — in two—player mode, one player will drive and one player will shoot, while in one—player mode you drive and shoot at the same time."

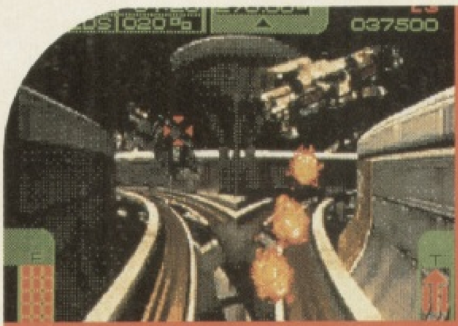
Obviously Cadillacs & Dinosaurs also has a very different setting to LoadStar's hard-edged sci-fi milieu, and it's been created in a very different way too. "The game is all viewed in what we call 2.5D," says Brownstein. "We've painted the trees and the scenery in 2D, and then animated the camera going past them, so it feels like it's 3D but using 2D art — it's kind of like driving past a bunch of postcards.

"From my perspective, I think we're seeing new images in Cadillacs & Dinosaurs — you haven't seen this before, it's totally fresh and totally different. And I think that's what also appealed to us about Mark's work — it was a new world that we hadn't seen before, especially in a video game."

Schultz himself has had no hands-on input into the game's design, but he has been consulted about it at every stage. "Mark has given us his blessing," says Brownstein. "We've sent him versions of the script to get his approval and to make sure that it's consistent with the characters and his view of the world.

"And he's been very happy and cooperative — he's given us extensive notes on the backgrounds of the characters and the background of the world. The good news is that David Fox, the game's designer, has kept the game fairly consistent with Mark's vision and there is almost nothing about which Mark has said 'That's not right'."

Interestingly, this is Brownstein's first computer game — his background lies in film/TV producing and directing. However, this lack of games experience has some beneficial by-products. "There were a lot of people working on the game who didn't have games experience," says Brownstein. "They didn't know what you can't do, and so they didn't say 'You can't do that — there aren't enough colours'. While that meant we ran into problems from time to time, it also meant we ended up getting a lot of things in the game that others wouldn't have tried or might have felt it was foolish to try."



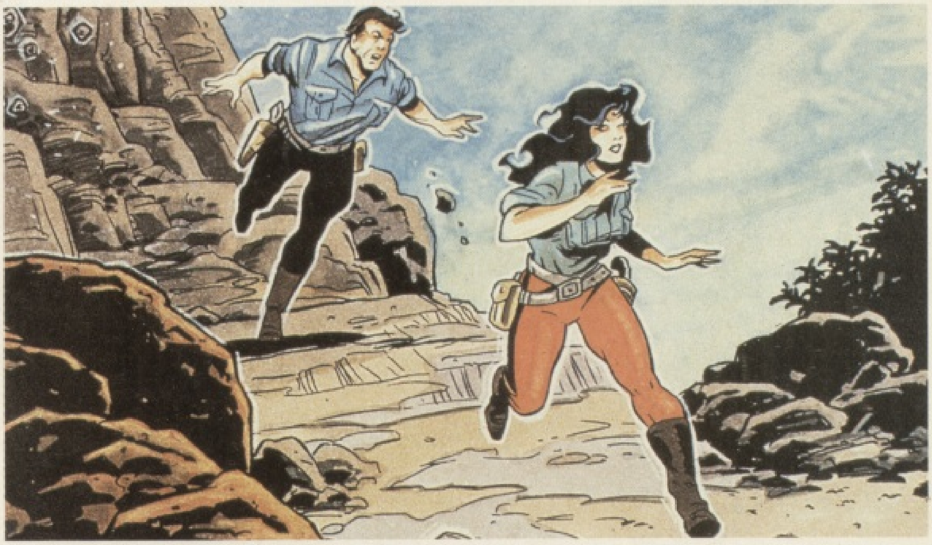
Planning For **The Future...**

One of the benefits of Rocket Science's Game Science development system is that it's possible to create games across a number of platforms relatively easily — you just inform the compiler which machine you're creating the game for, and it adjusts the video and code accordingly. LoadStar and Cadillacs & Dinosaurs, for example, are currently being ported onto the Sega MegaCD and, in the future, are likely to appear on just about every CD-based games system.

"We're what we call 'platform agnostic' — we'll go wherever we think we can make a buck," says Moriarty. "So we're looking at the Sega 32X and the Saturn, and the Sony Playstation, which is very attractive, and 3DO. Basically, we'll look at any place where we think we can make money.

"All the video that we do for these games is done in full—resolution 24—bit colour with 44kHz stereo sound — everything is done at the highest level, far beyond what any of the platforms currently available can actually show. The whole point of this is to be able to port stuff instantly and transparently between platforms."

Both LoadStar and Cadillacs & Dinosaurs are currently scheduled to be in the shops before this Christmas. The question is: Can Rocket Science finally succeed where so many others have failed, and get the Hollywood/Silicon Valley mix right? Only time will tell...



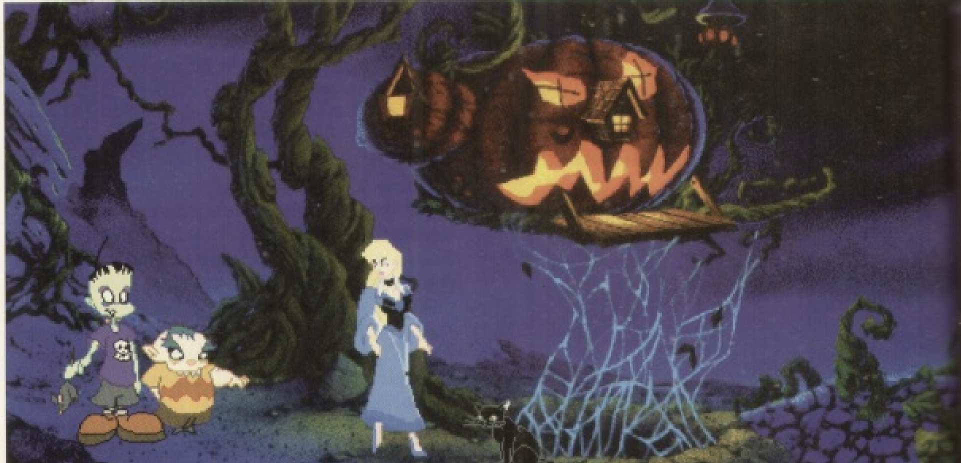
Sugar & *Spice*

Dean Evans put 78 spoonfuls of sugar and a whole tin of treacle into his tea, but it still wasn't as sweet as Sierra's King's Quest VII.

GAME	KING'S QUEST VII
PUBLISHER	SIERRA
DEVELOPER	IN-HOUSE
WORK *STARTED*	NOVEMBER 1993
DUE FOR *COMPLETION*	NOVEMBER 1994

Over 100 animators were drafted in to give King's Quest VII a modern, Disney-esque look and feel. It's obvious. Come on, if that wicked witch at the bottom of the page isn't straight out of Snow White then I don't know what is.

(Below) In addition to some gorgeous animation, King's Quest VII also has lavishly drawn backgrounds. If the gameplay matches the visuals, I can't see how the game can fail.



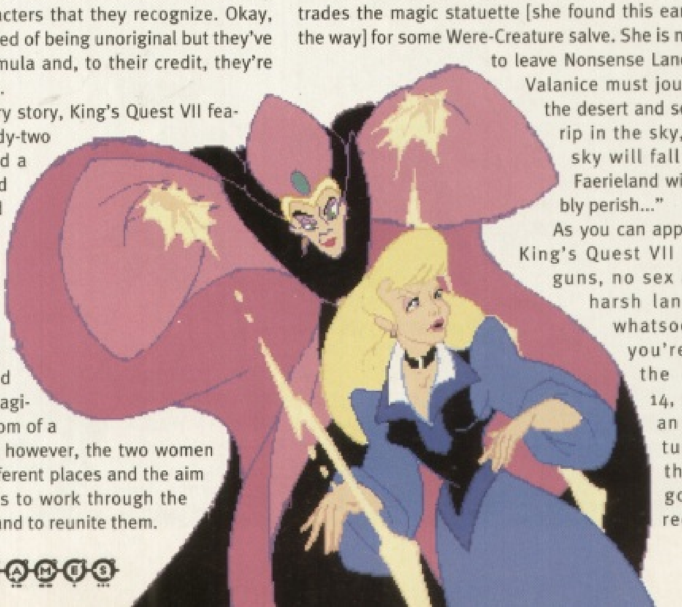
These days every graphic adventure seems to have a major angle or a thematic slant. Monkey Island has got its pirates, Beneath A Steel Sky embraces Blade Runner, and Simon The Sorcerer has its wizards and dragons. As for King's Quest VII, it has virgin princesses, gryphons, goblins and a love interest called Edgar. It's your typical fairytale nonsense. Oh Rapunzel, Rapunzel, let down your hair...

The King's Quest saga is getting to be a long one, rooted firmly in European fairy tales and the sort of stories that your mum used to read to you at bedtime. Wittily subtitled The Prince-less Bride, King's Quest VII is the first CD-only game in the series, a huge point-'n'-click adventure that features movie-quality animation, digitised speech and, of course, the same fluffy pink gameplay that appeared in King's Quests 1-6.

So far, the game has cost over $2 million to make and, like a major feature-length cartoon, over 100 animators — some of which were ex-Disney employees — were drafted in to create and bring to life King's Quest's many characters. As you can see from the pictures here, the $2 million seems to have been well spent — King's Quest VII looks absolutely stunning. The characters — there are over 30 individual characters in the game — all have a distinct Disney-esque style, and looking at the graphics it's hard to believe that Disney films like Snow White and Cinderella were not a major influence.

Although King's Quest VII *looks* very different to its predecessors, it's a certainty that it will play virtually the same. But then this is exactly the reason why Sierra are doing a seventh King's Quest. People like the games. They like to be involved in worlds that they know and with characters that they recognize. Okay, Sierra could be accused of being unoriginal but they've found a winning formula and, to their credit, they're sticking to it like glue.

Like any good fairy story, King's Quest VII features an array of goody-two shoes characters and a idyllic, peaceful land that is threatened with destruction. As for the story, this revolves around a mother, Valanice, and her daughter, Rosella, who have both been transported to Faerieland via a magical portal at the bottom of a pond. Unfortunately, however, the two women have ended up in different places and the aim of King's Quest VII is to work through the usual set of puzzles and to reunite them.



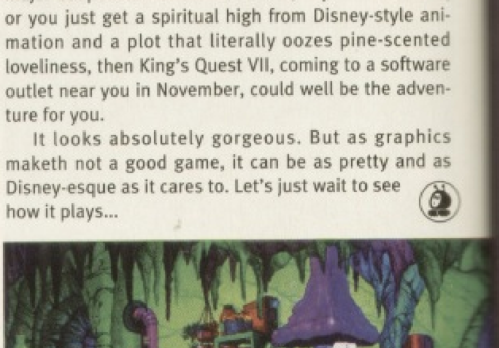
Now, I feel that I have to warn you here. King's Quest VII is very cutesy. No, it's massively cutesy, with a giant-sized portion of schmaltz and a sizable side order of cliche to go with it. But you don't have to believe what I say, here's a brief extract from the plot summary so you know what you can expect:

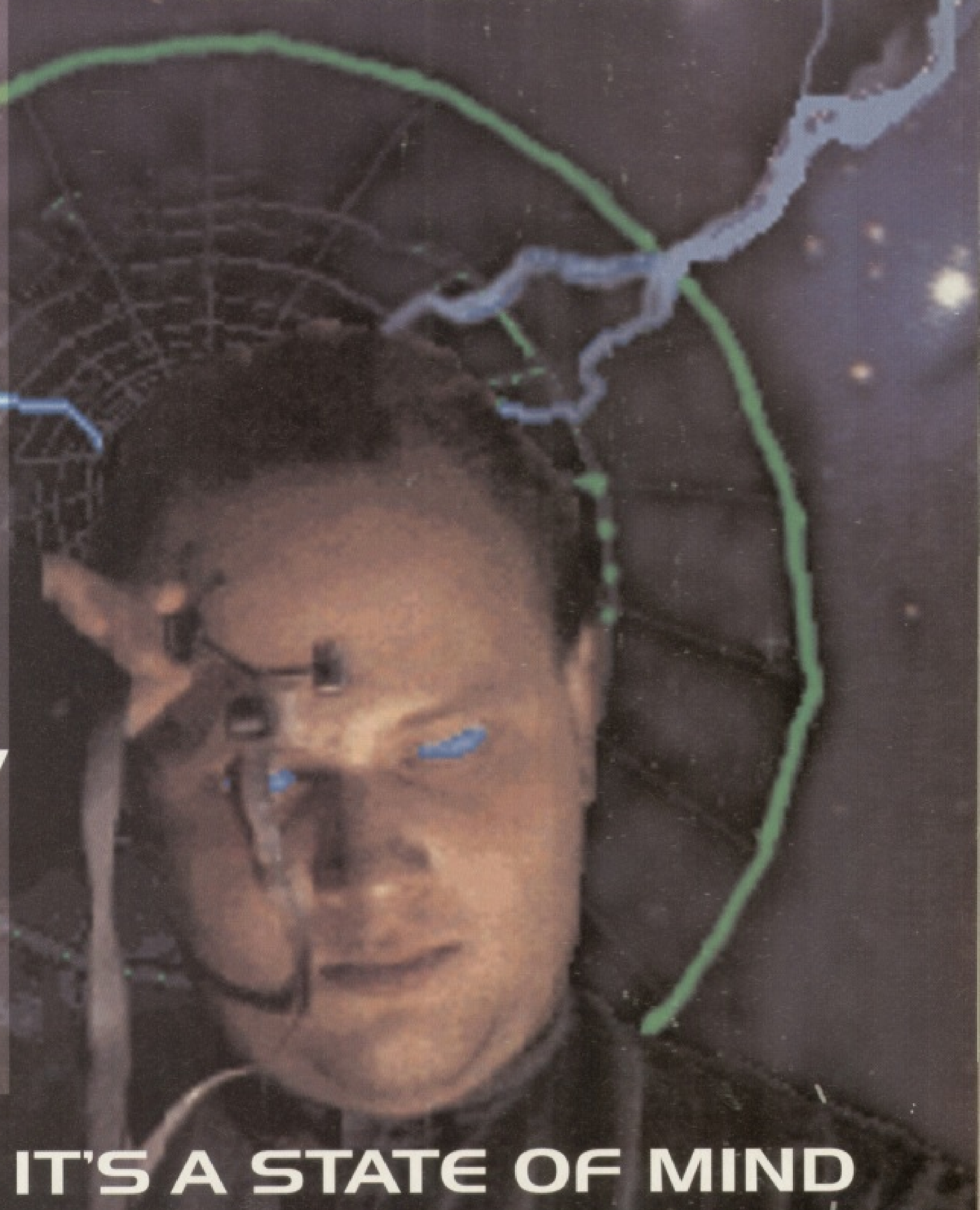
"Valanice has been arrested by the Arch-Duke of Nonsense Land and the Nonsense Landers are going to give her a horrible sentence unless she can find a way to return the moon to the sky. Luckily, she finds her way to the Rubber Jungle and the weird inhabitants catapult the moon into the sky for her.

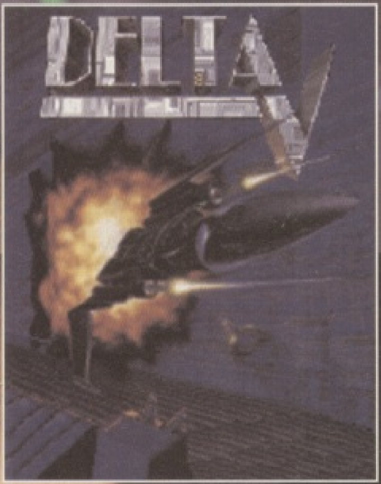
"After this she returns to Nonsense Land and trades the magic statuette [she found this earlier, by the way] for some Were-Creature salve. She is now free to leave Nonsense Land. Next, Valanice must journey to the desert and sew up a rip in the sky, or the sky will fall in and Faerieland will horribly perish..."

As you can appreciate, King's Quest VII has no guns, no sex and no harsh language, whatsoever. If you're over the age of 14, playing an adventure like this is going to require a major suspension of disbelief. But, if you're under 14 or you just get a spiritual high from Disney-style animation and a plot that literally oozes pine-scented loveliness, then King's Quest VII, coming to a software outlet near you in November, could well be the adventure for you.

It looks absolutely gorgeous. But as graphics maketh not a good game, it can be as pretty and as Disney-esque as it cares to. Let's just wait to see how it plays...







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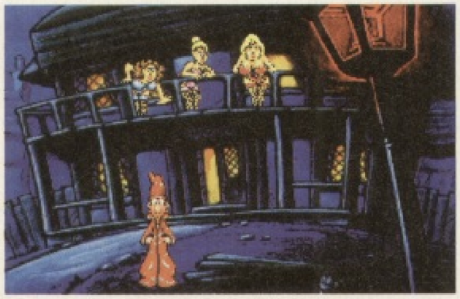
BETHESDA SOFTWORKS™

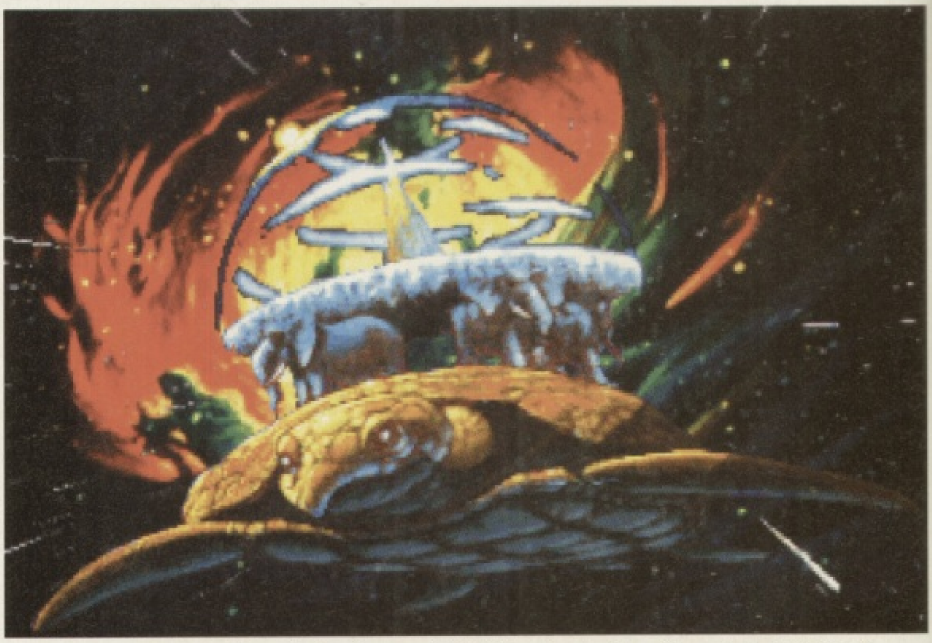
preview

Novel *Approach*

Alex Fraser voyages to the funniest fantasy world ever created to look at Psygnosis' new graphic adventure...

GAME	DISCWORLD
PUBLISHER	PSYGNOSIS
DEVELOPER	TEENY WEENY GAMES
WORK *STARTED*	AUTUMN 1993
DUE FOR *COMPLETION*	JANUARY 1995





The turtle A'tuin swims through the aether, heading towards the Big Bang, bearing Discworld upon its be-shelled back.

When The Colour Of Magic was published way back in the early 80s, no-one suspected that it would be the start of one of the biggest — and certainly most lucrative — book publishing phenomena in recent memory.

In The Colour Of Magic, author Terry Pratchett created a comic fantasy world — Discworld — which cleverly (though affectionately) lampooned the work of 'serious' fantasy writers such as Tolkien and Robert E. Howard. And in the process it captured the imagination of millions of readers all over the world.

Such was the public's positive response to the book, that a sequel was inevitable... And another... And another... Each one building upon the success of the last. Indeed, it's currently estimated that over four million copies of Pratchett's Discworld books have now been sold — and their popularity shows no visible signs of waning.

So it's perhaps surprising that it's taken so long — nearly ten years — for a Discworld-based game to appear. But the good news is that appear a game most certainly will: Discworld, as it's called, should be hitting the software shelves sometime this coming January — which will no doubt come as good news to games-playing fans of the books...

...And, it's hoped, to lovers of graphic adventuring too. Psygnosis, Discworld's publishers, have enlisted the help of Teeny Weeny Games to develop the game, and the result is a very faithful and incredibly pretty interpretation of the books, which should appeal as much to non-fans as it will to the converted.

All the novels' famous characters are present — Rincewind, Twoflower, Death, the Luggage, etc — but the scenario is totally original, a result of close consultation between Teeny Weeny and Pratchett himself.

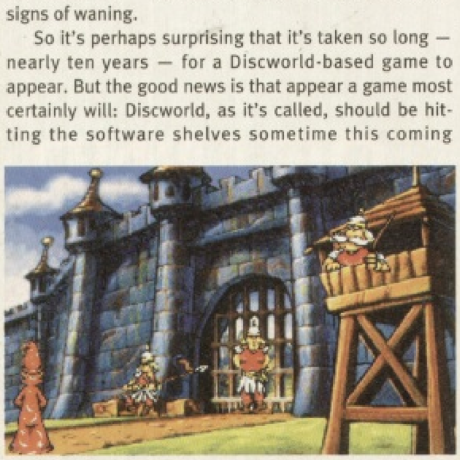
Of course, quite how each character's on-screen representation will fit in with the public's mental pictures of them remains to be seen, but then that was always going to be tricky — no doubt some fans will complain, but most will be more than satisfied because, graphically, the game is simply drop-dead gorgeous, boasting digitised painted backdrops, large, superbly-animated character sprites and frequent comedy cutscenes.

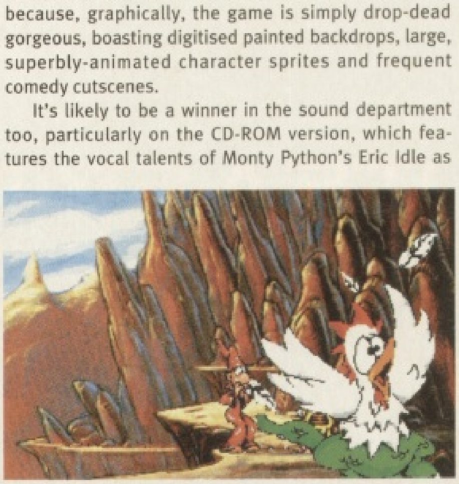
It's likely to be a winner in the sound department too, particularly on the CD-ROM version, which features the vocal talents of Monty Python's Eric Idle as Rincewind, as well as Jon Pertwee, everyone's favourite Doctor Who, and Tony Robinson, BlackAdder's Baldric, in a variety of roles — even Angela Sutherland, Teeny Weeny's boss, has a minor speaking role!

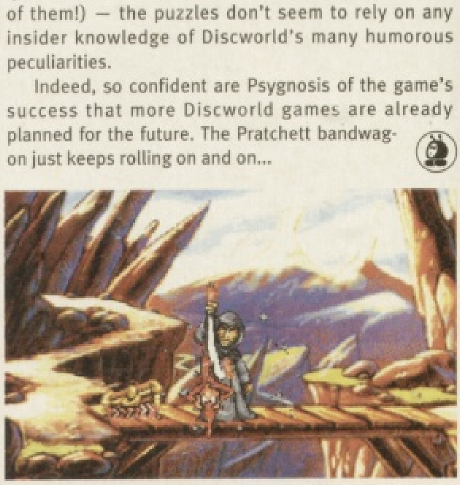
Teeny Weeny have steered away from employing a 'typical' player interface, with clunky action icons and inventory listings at the bottom of the screen, and have instead opted for a Windows-style system which, for the most part, allows the screen to be kept totally free of clutter, allowing the player to fully appreciate those lovely graphics in all their full-screen, 256-colour glory.

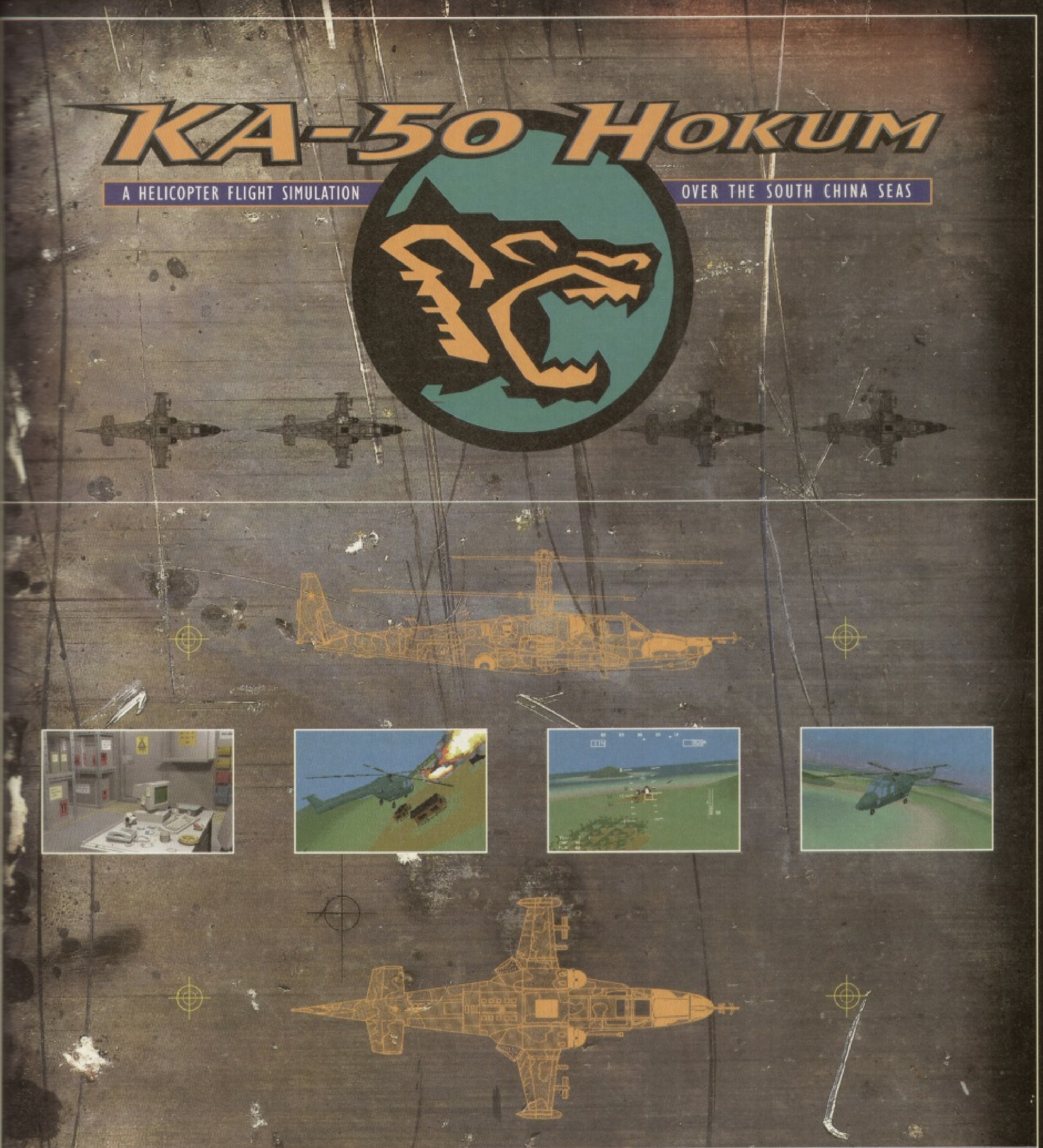
From what we've seen so far, the game looks set to be a winner. Fortunately for those people who haven't reads the novels — and it seems that there are still quite a few of them about (shame on you if you're one of them!) — the puzzles don't seem to rely on any insider knowledge of Discworld's many humorous peculiarities.

Indeed, so confident are Psygnosis of the game's success that more Discworld games are already planned for the future. The Pratchett bandwagon just keeps rolling on and on...









SCALE 1:72 | FORMATS: IBM PC AND COMPATIBLES | FIRST CLASS PILOT WANTED-APPLY WITHIN | VIE-94

Every day in the South China Sea up to 200 ships slow to as little as 15 knots to pass through sea-lanes less than a mile wide ... leaving them open to attack from pirates. Valuable cargo is constantly stolen. Sometimes lives and whole ships are taken. Understandably, not everyone is happy about the situation. Some corporations are prepared to spend vast sums of money employing people to protect their investment.

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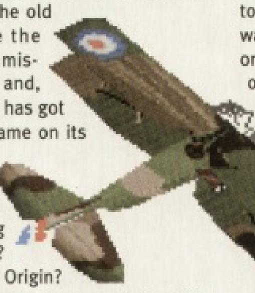
Blaze Of Glory

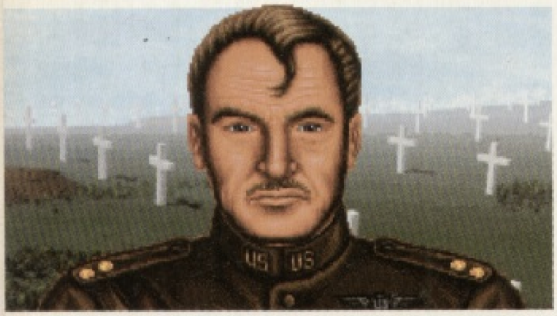
Origin steps back in time even further as it drags out the Strike Commander game engine for the last time. Has the Texas-based company finally got it right? Dean Evans straps on his goggles and takes one last look...

"Before laser-guided missiles, before infrared bombs, even before radio, there was still war in the sky," says Origin enthusiastically. "Wings Of Glory takes computer pilots back to the very basics of dogfighting."

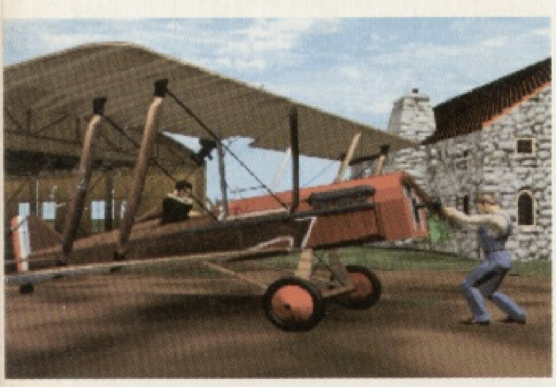


Okay, now I'm prepared to be disproved, but both you and I know that Wings Of Glory is probably going to be Strike Commander but with World War One planes. Yes, just drag out the old 3D game engine, change the graphics a bit, remove the missile racks, dump the radar and, wouldn't you know it, Origin has got another brand new flight game on its hands. Oh, bravo.

So why is one of the hottest programming teams in PC-dom churning out yet another plane game? Is originality finally dead at Origin? Warren Spector, the game's producer explains: "No, both myself and Bill [Bill Baldwin, the project leader] saw the potential that the Strike Commander game engine would have in a much slower dogfighting game. We wanted to get up really close, to put the player right on the tail of an enemy plane and to keep them there."



Like its predecessors, Wings Of Glory has both the lantern-jawed heroes (above) and the lavishly animated in-between-mission cutscenes. Absolutely fabulous.



Another deciding factor was the chance to incorporate the Strike Commander Virtual Cockpit technology, which allows the pilot to pan freely around the cockpit, looking out over his left wing, peering over his right shoulder, etc. Obviously, without a radar, in Wings Of Glory you have to locate your enemy visually, and the Virtual Cockpit becomes an invaluable aid. And that's the main appeal of the game — it's just you, a big box with wings and nothing but a machine gun and your wits to see you through the battle.

Like its two predecessors, Strike Commander and Pacific Strike, Wings Of Glory is a flight sim cleverly blended with an adventure story. Available in November on CD-ROM only, the game takes you back to the days of World War I, when men were men, war was dirty and the definition of a high-tech aircraft was one that could fly for five minutes without shooting its own propeller off.

You play a lantern-jawed American pilot. But this time, instead of battling the Kilrathi or taking on the Japs over Pearl Harbour, you have joined the Royal Flying Corps at the beginning of World War 1. Like Strike Commander and Pacific Strike, you can take part in a number of linked missions, flying such classic aircraft such as the Spad, the SE5, the Sopwith Camel and the Fokker Dr.1 — flimsy, canvas-covered crates you could only previously fly if you owned a copy of Dynamix's superb Red Baron or MicroProse's chunky Knights Of The Sky.

On the ground there's the usual familiar collection of movie stereotypes to chat to, including the grumpy mechanic, the CO and various fellow pilots. These conversations often reveal useful information about the planes and the enemy pilots and, although there's always the temptation to skip them, it's important to pay careful attention. Like Wing Commander, the Wings Of Glory plot evolves as a direct result of your actions in the previous battle and you don't want to miss out on a vital piece of mission-busting info.

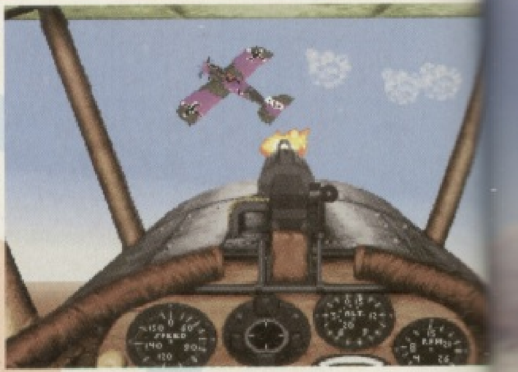
"The plot evolves," Warren Spector points out. "If you do well, your superiors recognise your skills and they'll send you on deadlier missions, taking out the so-called 'sausage' observation balloons as well as Zeppelins. All the while, newspaper headlines will keep you updated on the progress of the war, both the good news and the bad."

The premise for Wings Of Glory is a very sound one, but you can have all the prop-powered, silver-screen romanticism in the world, it won't necessarily add up to make a great flight sim. Of course, the RealSpace 3D graphics are impressive, if a little prone to blockyness. And, like any other Origin game, if you want to run Wings Of Glory with full detail and at a decent frame rate, you've got to have at least a 33MHz 486. Anything less and it dogfights like a dog.

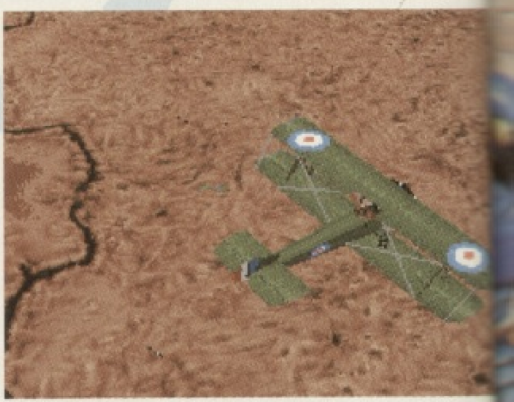
With four-channel digital sound, an Instant Mission Generator to let you fly against any combination of enemies you choose and a Mission Recorder, Wings Of Glory looks set to be a strong contender for the World War One aerial crown.

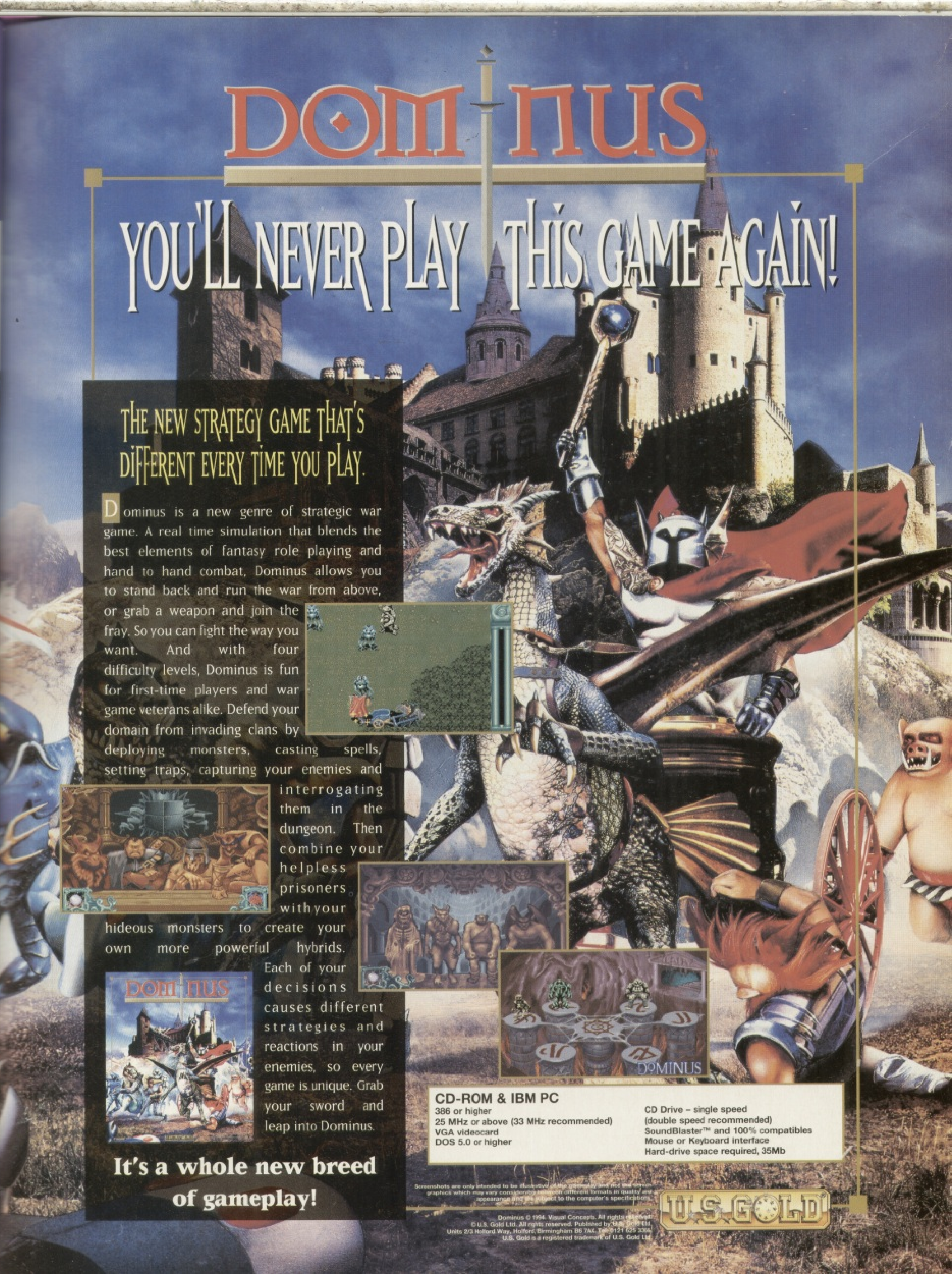
And you can be certain that, come November, it will be wheeling and swooping about in the air battling Empire's equally impressive-looking Dawn Patrol. So, who will return to a heroes welcome and who will end up as a small bonfire in a foreign field? We'll take to the air next month.

Game	Wings Of Glory
Publisher	Electronic Arts
Developer	Origin Systems
Work *Started*	November 1993
Due For *Completion*	November 1994



(Above) The RealSpace 3D engine provides a huge amount of detail, even if it is prone to being a touch on the blocky side. (Below) A British SE5 flies across the muddy French trenches.





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Screenshots are only intended to be illustrative of the gameplay and not the screen graphics which may vary considerably between different formats in quality and appearance and are subject to the computer's specifications.

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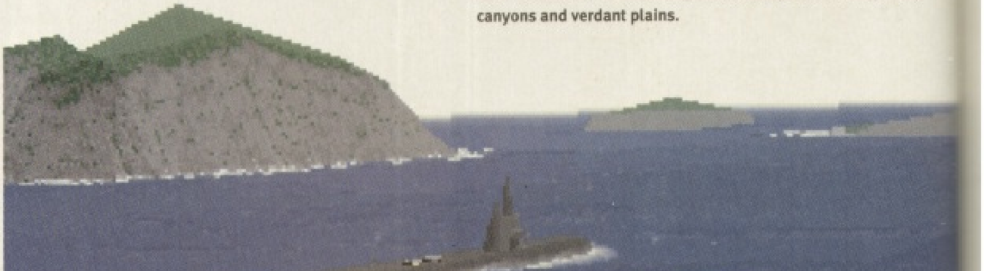
The *Big Cho*

Digital Image Design has yet another ground-breaking 3D game in development. It's got a big helicopter in it and Dean Evans was allowed to take an EXCLUSIVE peek...

The Chopper Game is very detailed. Here, as a suitably futuristic fighter climbs away from its submarine hangar, you can see how the 3D engine has advanced over TFX and Inferno. Check out the texture-mapping and, ooh, look at those waves gently lapping the shoreline...



Game	The Chopper Game (working title)
Publisher	Ocean
Developer	Digital Image Design
Work *started*	August 1994
Due for *completion*	March 1995

(Below) In The Chopper Game you will fly a variety of different missions over a wide range of landscapes, including rocky canyons and verdant plains.

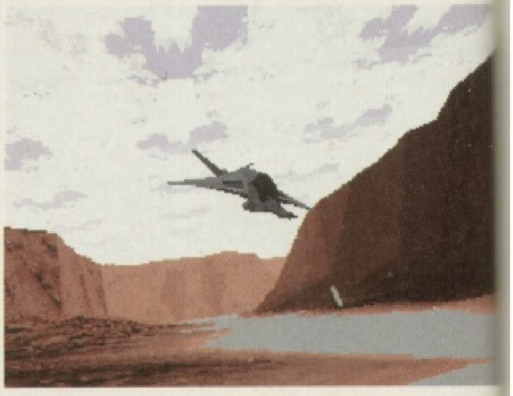
After the success of the UN flight simulation TFX and the cinematic space opera, Inferno, comes Chopper. Chopper is the provisional title for Digital Image Design's most ambitious 3D polygon game to date. Like TFX it will feature an accurately modelled 3D landscape and a host of fighter aircraft, but the impressive polygon routines have since evolved and become even better. The next generation of DID's 3D engine is faster and much more detailed — it really must be seen in action to be fully appreciated.

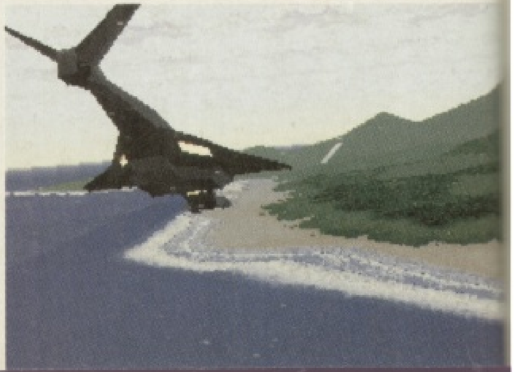
At this early stage of development (and I must point out that this is a very advanced look indeed), things are still very much subject to change. The plot of the game is still in the storyboard stage and the designers at Digital Image Design are currently focusing all their attention on TFX 2, which will feature completely new scenarios, a comprehensive multi-player option, new weapons and also a high-res Super VGA mode. Only when TFX 2 nears completion will DID turn their attention towards what they affectionately call The Chopper Game.

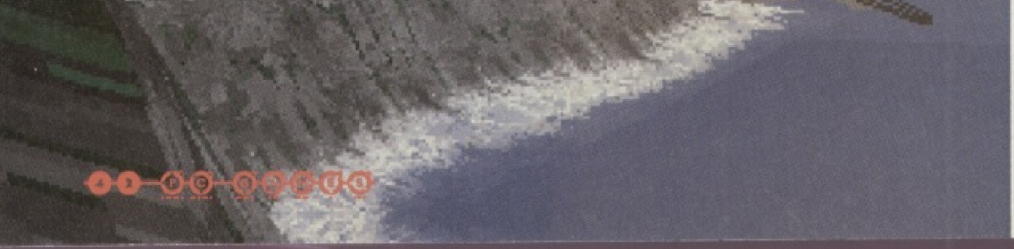
Unlike TFX, Chopper has more of an adventure-style plot. At the beginning of the game, you will play an airforce test pilot who must take on a variety of different missions over a variety of different landscapes — swooping down between the butes in Monument Valley, across dense mountain tree-lines, over glittering ice-floes, frozen tundra, and so on. The 3D engine is truly spectacular and is twice, if not three times as good as the one used in TFX and Inferno.

One of the criticisms levelled at TFX was that, although the 3D landscape was huge and very varied, the polygons themselves weren't very detailed – they were bland, flat and unrealistic. But, as you can see, this has been rectified in Chopper, and the landscape has all the Gouraud-shaded, texture-mapped bells 'n' whistles of an Origin game. The ground is texture-mapped, the sky is texture-mapped and everything is beautifully shaded. It moves pretty smoothly as well and from what I've seen so far, isn't prone to the ugly blockiness that plagues the Origin RealSpace engine in, say, Pacific Strike.

The helicopters are fairly impressive too, suitably futuristic-looking and powered by ram-jets and thrusters rather than the traditional thudding rotor blades. "For the vehicles we've used a mix of stealth technology, as used in the stealth bomber and the stealth fighter, as well as





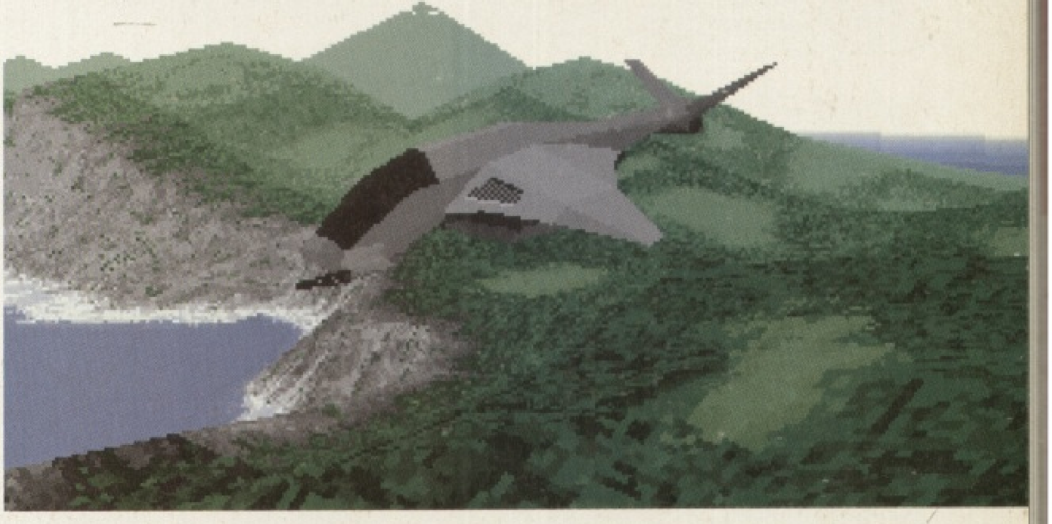


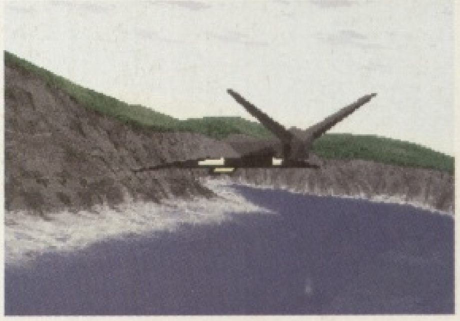
pper Game

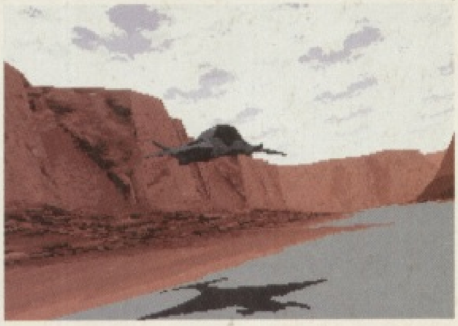
> "The vehicles use a mix of stealth technology, as used in the stealth bomber and the stealth fighter, and current helicopter technology like the Apache and the Hokum. Although it's set in the future, it is going to be a chopper game, and as such it's going to have an accurate helicopter flight model."

Ian Boardman,
Head of 3D, Digital Image Design

You start off in The Black Force test base, flying a cut-down version of the vehicle you'll eventually end up with, because you can pick up and add new weapons and thrusters along the way...

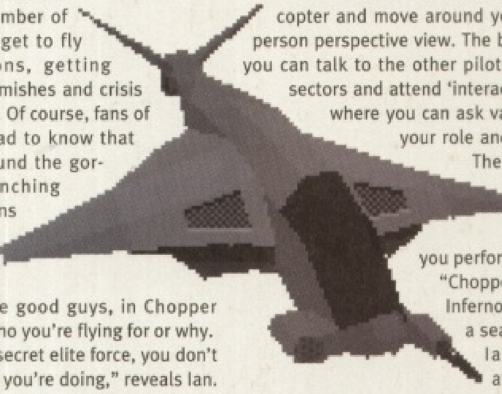






current helicopter technology from the Apache and the Hokum," explains Ian Boardman, DID's head of 3D graphics. "Although it's set in the future, it's still going to have the feel of a chopper game, and as such it's going to have an accurate helicopter flight model."

The early stages of the game are spent learning the basics, familiarising yourself with your futuristic helicopter and blindly following orders like a good rookie pilot should. Then, depending on how well you do in the early missions, you'll soon be spotted by the military top brass and then whisked away to a secret airbase to join the Black Force, an elite chopper squadron assigned to the most secret of top secret missions.



Once here the next phase of the game begins and, as a member of The Black Force, you will get to fly more dangerous missions, getting involved in small wars, skirmishes and crisis situations around the globe. Of course, fans of TFX and Inferno will be glad to know that you still get to weave around the gorgeous 3D landscape, launching missiles and firing your guns at anything that moves. Unfortunately, whereas in TFX you were flying for the United Nations and for the good guys, in Chopper you've absolutely no idea who you're flying for or why.

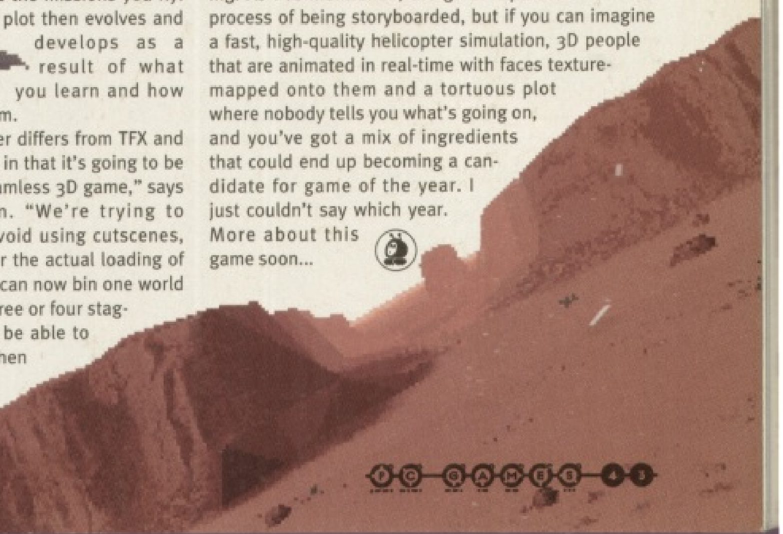
"When you join this top secret elite force, you don't know very much about what you're doing," reveals Ian. "But you do learn more about the plot as the game progresses, because you can wander around the base between missions, finding things out, picking up objects and talking to people."

Yes, by far the most interesting thing about Chopper is that it is not just a straight flight sim. The 3D simulation never actually ends because, in between the missions, you can literally climb out of your helicopter and move around your base using a first-person perspective view. The base itself is huge, and you can talk to the other pilots, take trains to other sectors and attend 'interactive' mission briefings where you can ask various questions about your role and the missions you fly.

The plot then evolves and develops as a result of what you learn and how you perform.

"Chopper differs from TFX and Inferno in that it's going to be a seamless 3D game," says Ian. "We're trying to avoid using cutscenes, and are going to try and stagger the actual loading of the 3D worlds. For example, we can now bin one world and load the next one in, say, three or four staggered parts. Ideally, you won't be able to tell that it's going on and so, when you get out of your vehicle and walk into the base, every time you open a door there'll be a five second delay and the game will load another 5% of the game."

Although most of the graphic design work is being done on TFX 2 at the moment, even at this early stage, the potential of the Chopper game is immensely exciting. As I've mentioned, the game's plot is still in the process of being storyboarded, but if you can imagine a fast, high-quality helicopter simulation, 3D people that are animated in real-time with faces texture-mapped onto them and a tortuous plot where nobody tells you what's going on, and you've got a mix of ingredients that could end up becoming a candidate for game of the year. I just couldn't say which year. More about this game soon...



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PC GAMES Issue 1

The amazing first issue of PC GAMES contained an exclusive in-depth preview of Origin's (still) forthcoming BioForge, as well as reviews of Ultima VIII, Cannon Fodder and Fleet Defender. Oh, and there were playable demos of TIE Fighter, Heimdall 2 and The Settlers on the coverdisks. A true collector's item, if ever we saw one.

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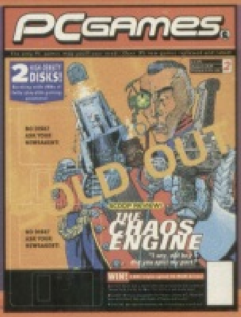
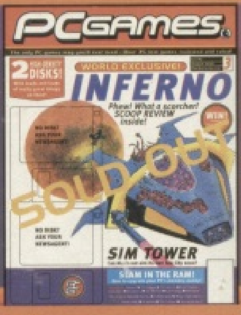
PC GAMES Issue 2

The mighty second issue of PC GAMES carried the world exclusive first review of the Bitmap Brothers' The Chaos Engine, in addition to Theme Park, Pacific Air War and The Settlers. This was also the issue that Dr Spanner made his debut, telling you all about installing a soundcard. And on the disks we had Zool 2, Cool Spot and Raptor. Woooo!



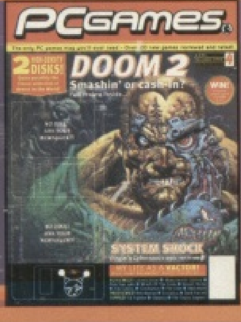
PC GAMES Issue 3

Yet another world exclusive! Yes, Inferno blasted its way into the third issue — and earned itself a PC GAMES STAR in the process. In the same issue we reviewed TIE Fighter, Outpost and FIFA Soccer, previewed NASCAR Racing and Wing Commander 3, and on the disks there were SIX playable 'things', including demos of Universe and Project-X!



PC GAMES Issue 4

Id Software finally unveiled Doom 2: Hell On Earth, and we were there on the scene to witness it. In the same issue, System Shock reared its not-unattractive head, as did Colonization and, er, Heimdall 2. There were fab previews of Retribution, Ecstatica and Dark Forces, and our disks were graced by the presence of Wacky Wheels and Transport Tycoon.



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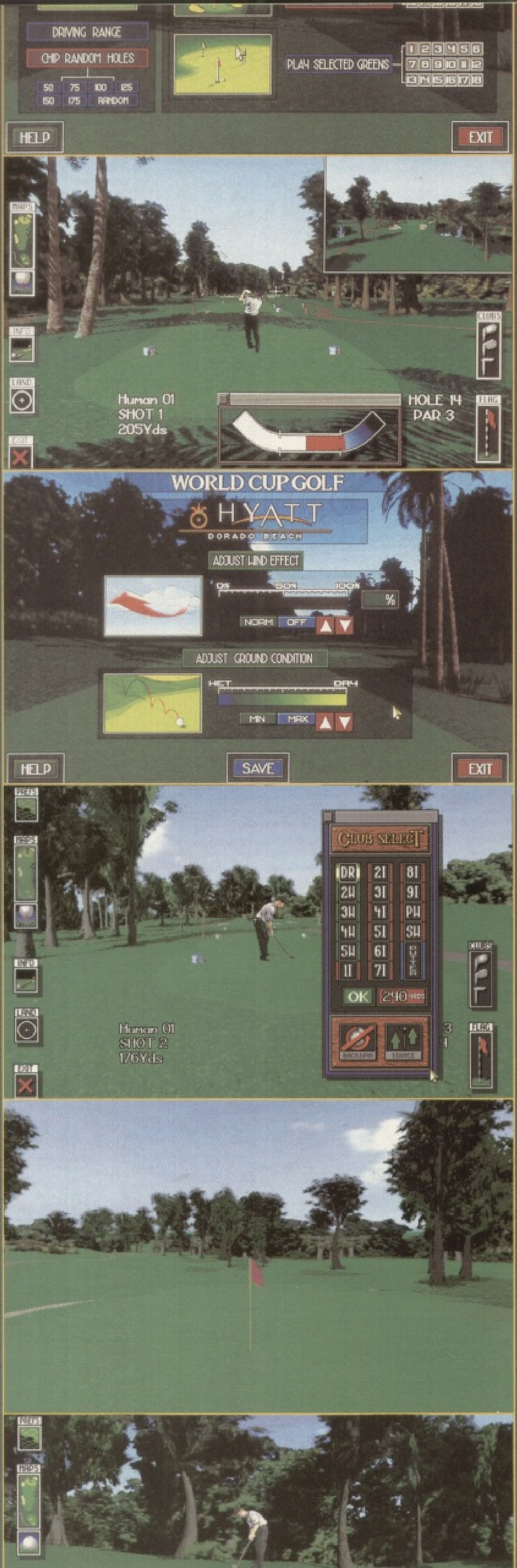
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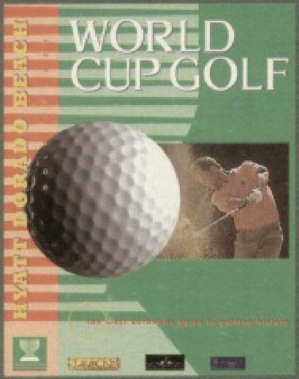
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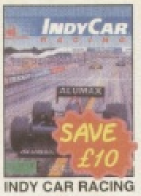

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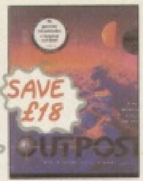

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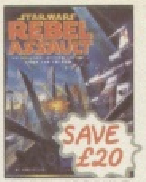

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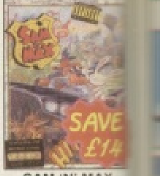

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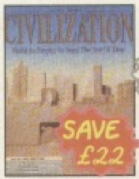

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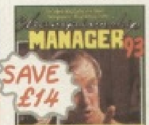

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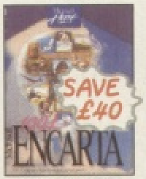

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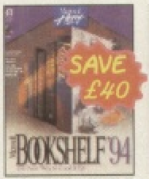

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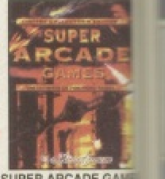

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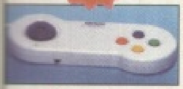

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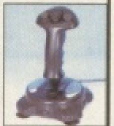

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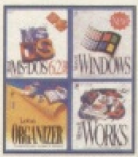

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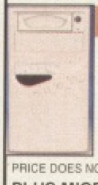

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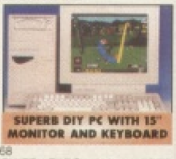

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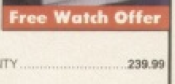

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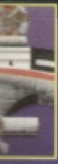

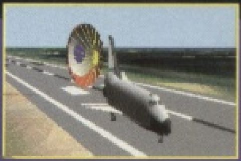
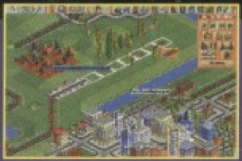

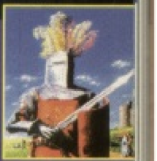

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Dream Web	Empire	86
Elimination	Libre	77
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Return To Ringworld	Time-Warner Interactive	68
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MINIMUM SPEC

33MHz 386, VGA, 4Mb RAM, 35Mb of hard disk space and mouse

ALSO SUPPORTS

Joystick; Sound Blaster, Pro Audio Spectrum, Wave Blaster and Sound Canvas soundcards.

Details the minimum machine specification as recommend by the software company, along with how much valuable hard disk space it takes up and what optional peripherals it'll recognise.

THE GOOD...

- Wonderfully well-animated graphics with lots of variety.
- Excellent sound effects throughout.
- Great fun for anyone who's not a major strategy-head.

...AND THE BAD

- TIf you *are* a major strategy-head it might seem a bit low-brow.
- Two player mode is a little flawed and I can't see it being played over the phone much in this country.

The game's good and bad points, which are basically a concise summary of the criticisms made in the main review.

Overall

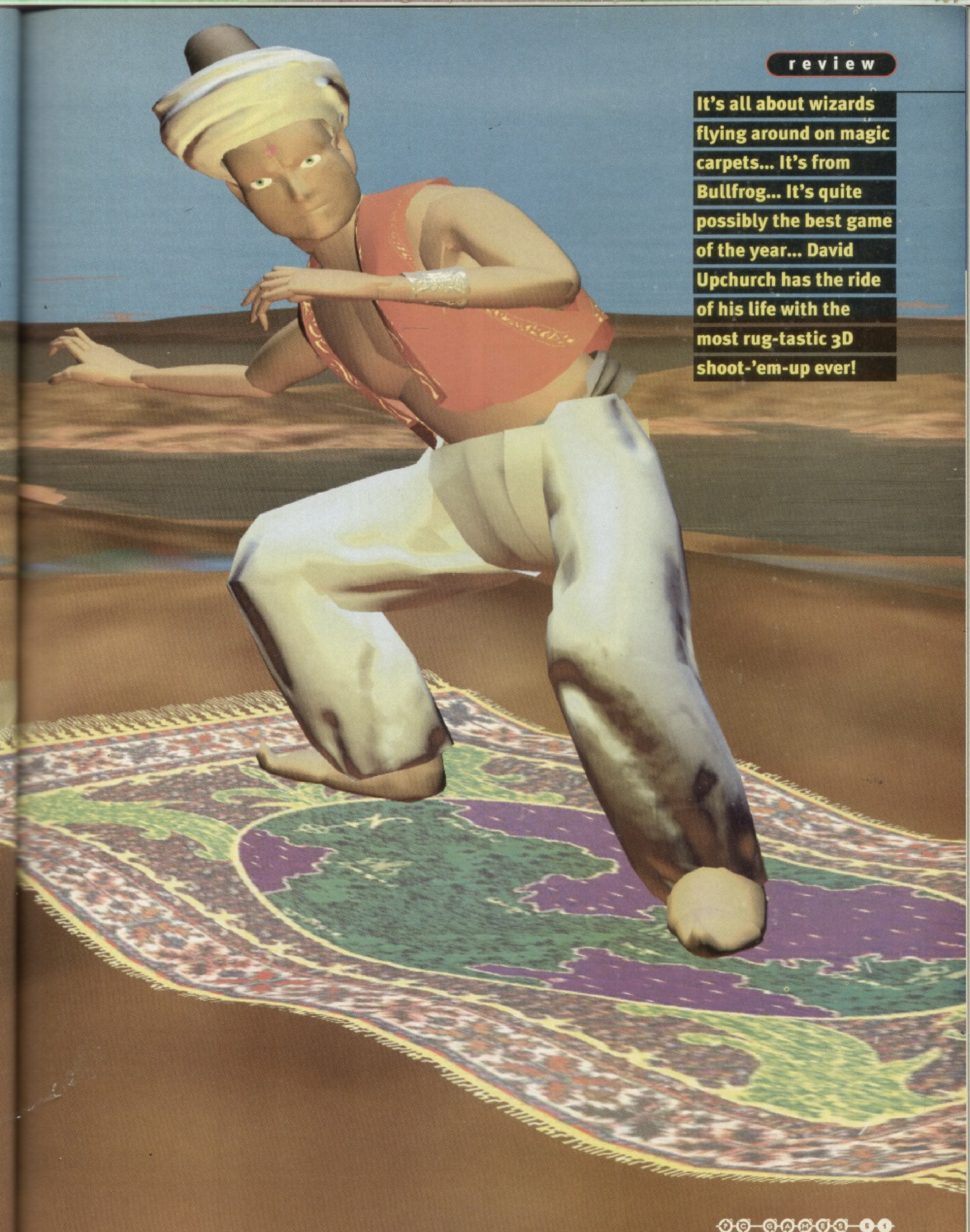
85%

The Overall Score. We don't see any point in ratings for playability and all that other stuff — you get one mark to sum everything up and that's it.

Finally, we have the essential score panel...

PC GAMES STAR

Magic Carpet CD



It's all about wizards flying around on magic carpets... It's from Bullfrog... It's quite possibly the best game of the year... David Upchurch has the ride of his life with the most rug-tastic 3D shoot-'em-up ever!

The sorry tale of how the planet came to be in a mess is told in story-book form...

The screen dissolves to show the young apprentice, holding a magical orb...

The orb rises, then falls onto the rug on the floor, instilling it with magical life...

A dragon's roar is heard! The lad hops on the carpet and prepares to do battle...

Oh, That's *Lovely...*

We love a game with a good intro sequence, we do — and Magic Carpet's is simply *exquisite*. Here it is, in all its rendered glory...

When I was a child I dreamed of having my own magic carpet, and of being able to soar and swoop high over the rooftops of my home village. And now, at long last, those dreams have been fulfilled. Not literally, you understand — the only thing magical about the carpets in my house is the fact that you can still see the pattern beneath all the lager and curry stains.

No, I am, of *course*, referring to Magic Carpet, the latest game to emerge from the pedigree Bullfrog stable. Already on something of a roll after the phenomenal critical and commercial success of Theme Park, the Bullfrog phenomenon shows no signs of losing steam with this — it's not only the best game Bullfrog have ever created, it's also in with a odds-on chance of being the game of the year.

Magic Carpet is set in a mystical, Aladdin-style fantasy world. Once a beautiful blue and green jewel floating serenely through space, the planet has been scarred and ravaged by an apocalyptic war between rival power-crazed wizards. Now, as the apprentice of the last 'good' wizard (now deceased, sadly), it's your duty to attempt to restore the world's natural balance.

This plot is detailed in the game's lengthy but impressive intro. Starting off as a tale read from an ancient manuscript, it neatly dovetails into a beautifully rendered animated sequence depicting the apprentice hero battling a fire-breathing dragon.

Typically, of course, such intros are the over-sweet icing on a disappointingly ordinary and bland cake. No so in Magic Carpet's case — if anything, the in-game graphics are even more jaw-dropping than the intro's.

You see, our turban-headed hero doesn't travel across his troubled world on anything so mundane as a horse or a ship. Oh no, he's a wizard's apprentice, remember? And what better mode of transport for an aspiring mage could there be other than a magic carpet? Nothing... except a broomstick, maybe — but then he's a warlock, and only witches use broomsticks.

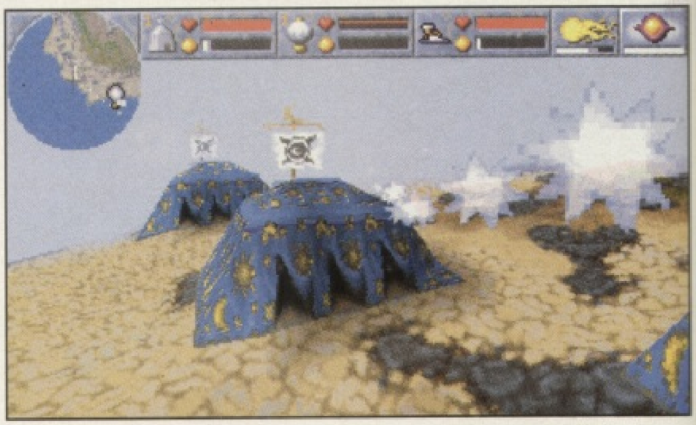
Employing an 'in your face' first-person 3D perspective, your carpet's-back view of the eerily-beautiful, mist-shrouded world is truly spectacular. Gliding oh-so-smoothly over the rugged hills, plunging crevasses and dense woodlands is a joy in itself — it's very easy to become completely mesmerised by the whole thing.

And if you've got a *really* fast machine — a Pentium would do nicely — you can turn on all sorts of additional special effects, like a texture-mapped sky, reflections in the water and anti-aliasing. However, while this *does* add to the experience, the basic 3D is perfectly good enough as it is, so owners of mere 33MHz 486s needn't feel that they're missing out on too much.

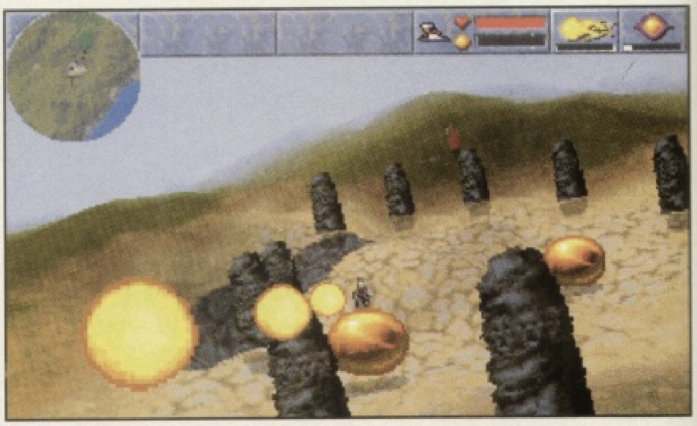
Perhaps the most incredible thing about this 3D — by far the best I've ever seen on the PC, or any other machine for that matter — is that it's Bullfrog's first attempt at a 'true' 3D engine; their previous games — i.e. Populous, Powermonger, Syndicate — have all used a forced isometric-3D perspective. Given the engine's power and versatility, I've a feeling we'll be seeing a lot more of it in future Bullfrog games...

It's a bit like...

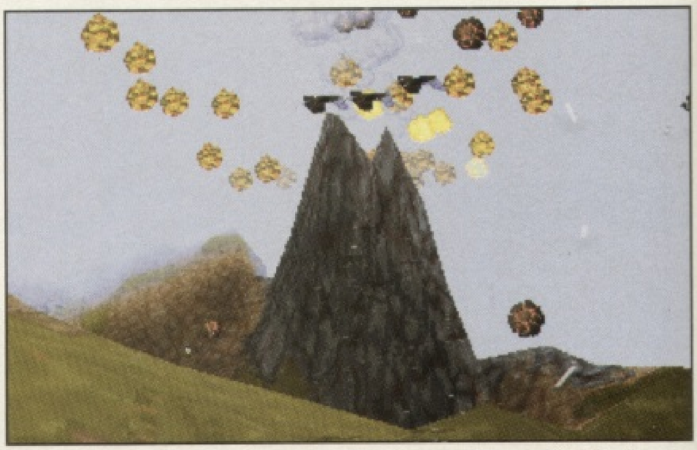
...Doom, especially in multi-player mode. Easily as tense and nail-biting as Doom ever was, Magic Carpet's gameplay also offers far more subtlety and, because of the freedom you have to move around and interact with the gameworld, there's greater scope for cunningly devious tactics. Indeed, Magic Carpet is destined to become the net-player's favourite after-hours time-waster...



You can choose to blow up houses and kill the people inside to get their Mana, but it's better to use Possession spells on them instead — you're awarded the Mana instantly, rather than having to wait for your balloons to pick it up.



Some special features on the landscape are trapped — fly too near to them and something disastrous may happen, like an army of skeletons will appear and attack you, or a volcano will erupt. However, clever players can try to lure their opponents into them...



Seeing the Volcano spell in action is a truly awe-inspiring experience — a pillar of rock erupts from the ground, spewing fire and balls of lava from the top. Golly!

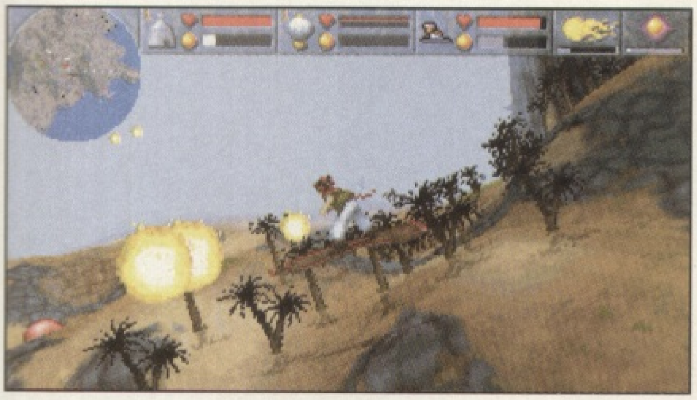
In the epic conflict that follows, mere fireballs soon prove uselss against the beast...

The apprentice draws on all his mystical power and generates an awesome spell...

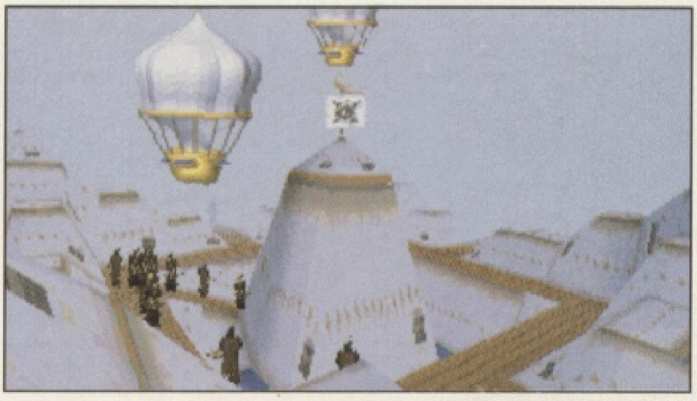
...Which he casts at the approaching dragon in a desperate last ditch attempt to kill it...

The dragon dead, our weary hero flies slowly back to his castle home...

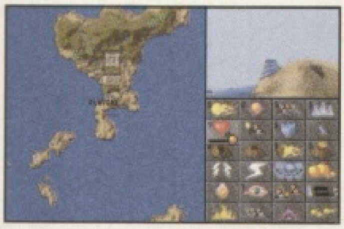
(Below) Take that, you fiend! Although battling rival wizards is a serious drain on your Mana and health, it can repay dividends — by casting a Possession spell at the skeleton of the dead wizard, you gain all the spells they owned.



(Below) Take care when placing your castle — build it too near another building and your base's expansion will be restricted by the obstruction in the way. This is another fact that can be used to your advantage if you're a bit smart...

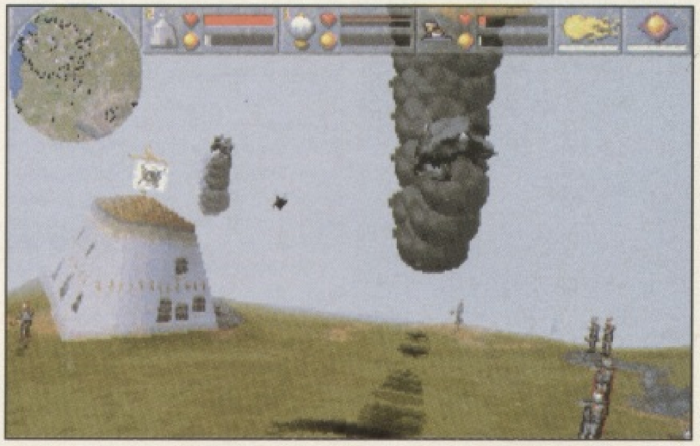


Gorillas and trolls don't like being disturbed. Shoot at them and they'll lob boulders and rocks at you. Nasty.



Pressing both mouse buttons or the Return key brings up a map of the current realm and the spell menu — all 24 spells are shown.

The sea-dwelling Krakens are *really* tough cookies — first they 'lock on' to you with a Rubber Band spell, then they cast Lightning spells at you. Aaaiiieeee!



Ah. Whoops. I saw this spell jar on my scanner and went to get it, and unwittingly activated a trap. I'm now surrounded by legions of skeleton warriors, swarms of bees and a dragon or two. I should've *known* the spell wouldn't be that easy to pick up.

The wonderful thing about it all is that flying on the carpet *feels* exactly how you imagine it would do. Part of this is down to the simple and very-easy-to-get-the-hang-of mouse/keyboard-combo control system where, basically, the mouse governs the steering and the keyboard the speed you travel at.

Within seconds of playing you'll be as proficient at, um, carpet driving (for want of a better term) as, say, Aladdin — although thankfully, there's no irritating Robin Williams-voiced genie accompanying you. Indeed, it's all so intuitive that, like any good control system, it soon becomes transparent, allowing you to get on and enjoy the game without any hassle.

The excellent flying sensation is also partly due to the clever and subtle use of sound. Fly up high and all you can hear is the roar of the wind, descend down to sea level and you begin to hear the lapping of the waves, glide past a flock of birds and you can hear them squawk and flap, and so on. Acting as a backdrop to all this is a marvellously 'ambient' Middle Eastern-style soundtrack, which changes tempo and force depending on what's going on onscreen. Fantastic.

But what's the game like? After all, if the game's a dog, then even the best 3D engine in the world (which, actually, this probably is) is worthless. Relax — Magic Carpet plays as good as it looks and sounds, if not better.

As mentioned earlier, your task is to restore your homeworld's natural balance. Obviously, it's a little unfair to expect you to harmonise the whole planet at once, so to make your life easier it's been broken down into fifty realms. Once a realm's natural balance is back to normal, you can move on to the next and do it all over again. As you'd expect, the going get tougher the further you progress.

But how do you restore each realm's natural balance? By collecting a set amount of Mana, that's how. Every creature in the gameworld — and these include peasants, soldiers, skeletons, dragons, griffons, trolls and even giant crabs! — possess Mana, a magical energy force. Killing these creatures forces them to release their Mana (shown as a shiny golden sphere) which you can then collect — once you've built a castle, anyway, but I'll get on to them in a moment or two.

Mana is also the 'fuel' for your spells. At first you have no spells, but scour the landscape and you'll eventually find little red jars which, when picked up (by simply flying into them), add a spell to your inventory. You can then assign this spell to either your right or left mouse button and use it in battle.

In all there are twenty-four types of spell you can employ, ranging from the basic cheap 'n' cheerful spells like Fireball and Speed-Up, through the 'useful' spells like Heal and Temporary Invisibility, to the mega-destructive but Mana-sapping spells such as Volcano and Meteor. Basically speaking, the more potent the spell is, the more Mana you have to acquire before you can cast it and the longer it takes to recharge before you can cast it again.

The special effects accompanying the spells are breath-taking. Casting the Skeleton Army spell, for example, causes a group of undead warriors to grow from the earth. The Earthquake spell, on the other hand, cuts a ragged gash across the landscape, the ground crumbling away before your eyes, while Volcano makes a mountainous pillar of rock erupt from the earth, spewing fire and balls of flaming lava into the sky. The first time you see these spells in action, you really won't be able to believe your eyes.

Perhaps my favourite spell — and arguably the most important one — is the Castle spell, which creates a fortified base in which to store your Mana. When you first cast this spell it erects a pathetic little keep, but every further time it's cast, the size and strength of your castle grows. Walls, towers and parapets form — you even get a small battalion of soldiers to help guard it from attack.

And you get hot-air balloons too. These balloons are your automatic Mana collectors, drifting slowly across the realm, picking up the Mana left by slain monsters and taking it slowly back to your castle for storage. However, they'll only pick up Mana that you've 'possessed' by using the aptly-named Possession spell — you can tell when a Mana ball has been possessed because it changes colour from gold to silver.

As you progress through the fifty realms, the creatures you face become tougher to kill — and you'll often find that they won't give up their precious Mana without a fight. You'll encounter rival wizards too, each scooting about on their own magic carpets and with their own castle bases — and this is when the game gets *really* interesting.

Like you, these wizards are hungry for Mana and will do *anything* to get it. They'll think nothing of possessing the Mana from monsters you've just spent five minutes trying to kill, or destroying your balloons to get at the Mana inside, or pulverising your castle and stealing your precious Mana stores.

The worst thing is that they're a bugger to kill — or, at least, to kill permanently. You knock them out of the sky with a Meteor spell and think you're safe, then they turn up again, good as new. You see, the problem is that wizards regenerate a short time after being killed as long as their home castle is still standing. The trick therefore is to zap them, then rush over to their castle and knock it down, say, an Earthquake or Volcano spell before they have a chance to rejuvenate. It's not easy...

Of course, you get no such 'second chances' — once your health bar is down to zero, that's it, game over, start again. Luckily, however, there are several ways that you can replenish your waning health, such as the Heal spell or, alternatively, by hovering over your castle or one of the stone dolmans that litter the landscape.

Although Magic Carpet may sound like a relatively simple 3D shoot-'em-up, you'll soon find that you have to apply a surprising amount of strategic thought if you're ever going to reach the game's fiftieth realm. There are various little tricks you have to employ to defeat those rival wizards, especially as in the later levels they often start out much more powerful than you.

I don't want to reveal too many of these tricks here — I'm saving them for the player's guide next month! — but, as an example of the sort of thinking involved, the fact that you can only see rival wizards that are within your line of sight, and vice versa, can be used to your advantage — by using the landscape for cover and popping out to fire off a few shots when it's safe, you can gradually wear down your more-powerful rivals without (hopefully!) taking any damage yourself.

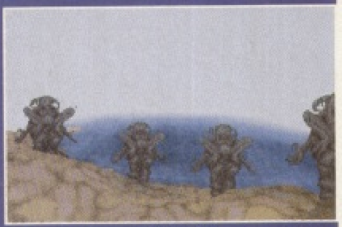
As a one-player game Magic Carpet is superb — exhiliratingly fast, action-packed and completely absorbing. However, it's as a multi-player game that the game really comes into its own. Via a network it's possible to play against up to seven other players, all battling for Mana and ultimate power in one of ten specially designed 'arenas'.

This is, as you can probably imagine, wonderfully exciting. Dogfighting against my work mates, lobbing Meteors and Lightning Bolts at them, is the most fun I've had in a long, long time, even relegating that old favourite Doom into second place.

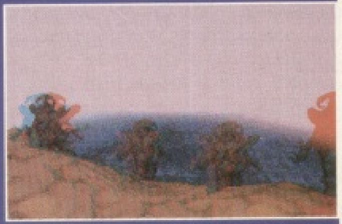
There's not one serious criticism I can make about Magic Carpet. Technically it's totally flawless, and as a game it's brilliantly designed and mind-bogglingly playable. Take it from me, Magic Carpet is simply awesome, and bears all the hallmarks of a classic. Can PC games possibly get any better than this?

Choices In 3D!

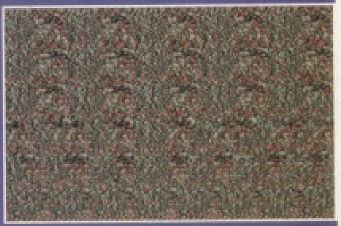
Magic Carpet offers the player the choice between three types of 3D image...



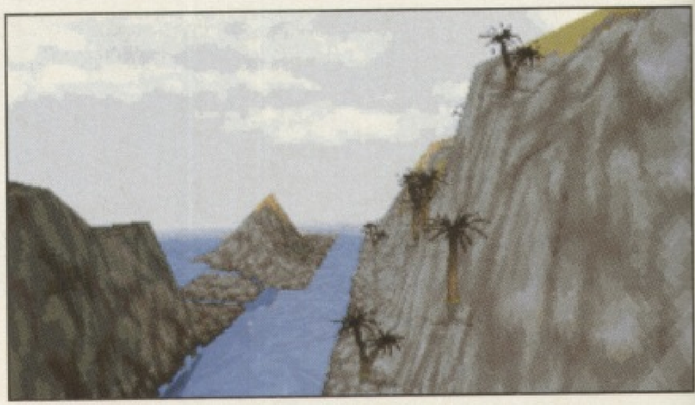
...There's the normal 'flat 3D' mode, which is the one I suspect most people will use...



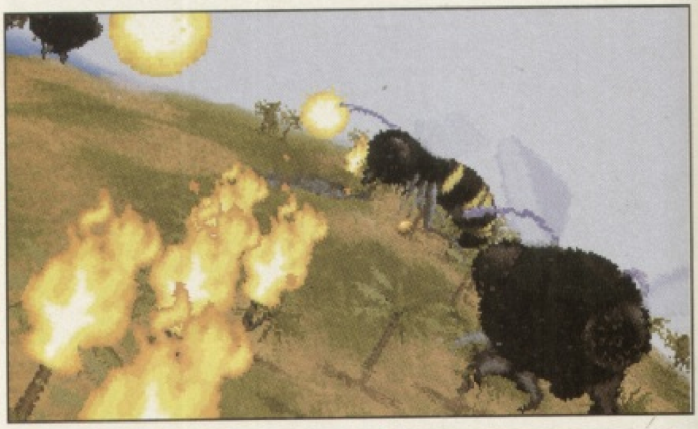
...Then there's the 'Put on your 3D glasses' mode, as seen in old 50s' horror films...



...And finally there's the 'Go all boggle-eyed and make your head hurt' 3D mode.



If you've got a beefy Pentium you can switch on loads of extra graphical frills, such as water reflections, textured sky and anti-aliasing, which 'smooths' the graphics.



I keep telling these giant and very nasty bees that I haven't nicked their honey but they just won't have it.

(Below) After successfully completing each realm you're treated to a short cutscene.

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- **Intense and exciting action, requiring a surprising amount of strategic thought.**
- **The sensation of flying is simply breathtaking.**
- **Brilliant multi-player mode that knocks Doom for six.**

...AND THE BAD

- **Errrr...**

Overall

95%

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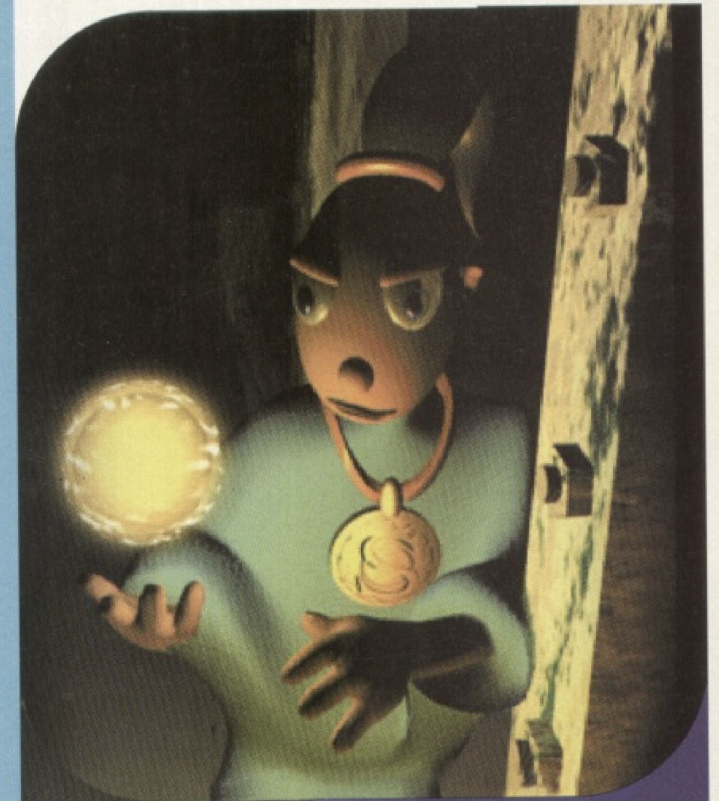
PC GAMES STAR

Little Big Adventure CD

With his yellow ball and tunic of power, Dean Evans sets out to defeat the evil Dr Funfrock in Adeline's 3D adventure.



Right, I'm going to lay my reviewer's cards on the table right here and now. Little Big Adventure, from French developer Adeline Software, is quite possibly the most stunning, engaging and absorbing game I've played since I first saw Alone In The Dark. The atmosphere is superb, the graphics literally take your breath away and the music and the speech are absolutely outstanding.

I'm not going to rattle on about how good the 640x480, 256-colour Super VGA graphics are — you can see them here for yourself. But what you can't really appreciate (unless you play the demo on this month's covermounted CD, of course) is the style and the feel of LBA. And then there's the sheer size of the game too — it's immense. I haven't seen another isometric-3D adventure that looks, plays and sounds quite this good. Even though I'm only at the end of my second paragraph, if you've got a CD-ROM drive, I urge you to go out and buy it. As soon as possible.

But enough gushing praise for the moment, what's the game actually about? Well, LBA is set on the planet of Twinsun, a watery world populated by the Grobos (big, sad-looking elephants), the Rabibunnies (hyperactive rabbits) and the Quetches (human-looking creatures with dinky little pony-tails). It should be an idyllic, happy place but, unfortunately, this isometric-3D world has fallen prey to the evil Dr Funfrock who has seized absolute control and set up a brutal police state.

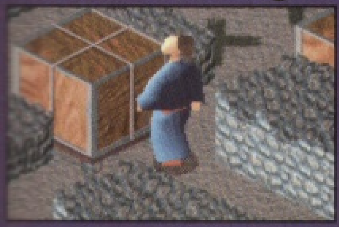
But while the military are setting up their barbed-wire barricades and throwing innocent civilians into the slammer, a young Quetch named Twinsen is already plotting to overthrow the new regime. Well, okay, he's not plotting exactly, but he is convinced that he's been visited in dreams by the old deity, Sendell, and claims that Sendell has told him to thwart the plans of the evil Dr Funfrock.

Unfortunately, it seems that the authorities have got wind of this mystical mumbo-jumbo. Revolutionary thoughts need to be punished and a detachment of butch Groboclones nips round to Twinsen's house at three o'clock in the morning, arrests him and carts him off to the local lunatic asylum.

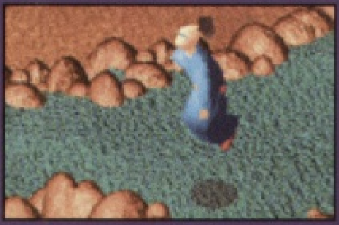
In LBA you take control of Twinsen who, as the game begins, is languishing in a small prison cell. Put simply, the idea of the game is to escape, find your girlfriend Zoe and then somehow overthrow the Funfrock military junta. But how can you defeat a hugely-equipped army when all you have is some spare change and a talent for kick-boxing? They've got machine guns, robots, coshes, lasers, cannons, homing bombs, etc and, worse still, there's hundreds of them. I'm sorry, even Arnie would have a problem with this one.

Now, if you feel that a quest of epic proportions is on the way you're absolutely right. In terms of gameplay, Little Big Adventure is very conventional and features the usual adventure-style trappings, i.e. you must travel to various locations, interact with characters and use miscellaneous objects to solve rudimentary puzzles and problems. Imagine a combination of Alone

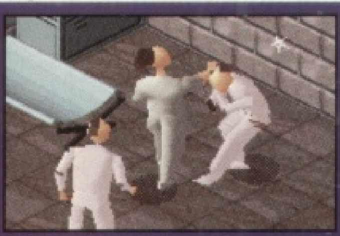
Men Behaving Badly



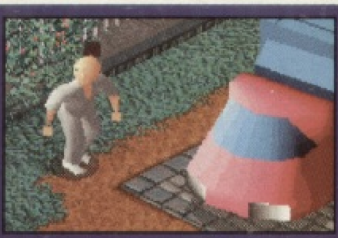
winsen has four behaviour modes and the st of these is Normal, allowing him to walk out, push objects and start conversations.



In Athletic mode, Twinsen can run and pressing SPACE makes him jump. Very useful for evading guards and leaping platforms.



Agressive mode speaks for itself, and pressing the SPACE bar makes Twinsen punch, kick and head-butt his enemies. Ouch!



Lastly, Discreet mode allows Twinsen to creep by guards without being heard. Tap the the SPACE bar and he will try to hide.

n The Dark and Pagan: Ultima VIII and ou'll have some idea of what LBA feels nd plays like.

In fact, as LBA was designed by the bulk of the programming team that developed Alone In The Dark, it's hardly surprising that the visual techniques, the animation and the movement are very similar. The control system is practically identical, in that you use the cursor keys to move Twinsen around and the SPACE bar to initiate any relevant actions. Twinsen can use any one of four different 'behaviour' modes (Normal, Athletic, Aggressive and Discreet), and each of these has its own particular associated action.

For example, pressing the SPACE bar in Normal mode will start a conversation with a nearby character or search a flowerpot, cupboard, etc. In Athletic mode, pressing SPACE will make Twinsen jump, while in Aggressive mode he will kick and punch. It's an intuitive system, much less fiddly than Alone In The Dark's, and very easy to use and get to grips with.

As I've mentioned your first task is to escape the asylum and, once you've achieved this, you find yourself in the streets of the main town. Like Alone In The Dark, as Twinsen moves from location to location, the 3D engine shifts the view using flick-scrolling rather than the smooth eight-directional scroll of something like Ultima VIII. But nevertheless, it works very well and after a while you hardly notice it all.

To piece together the plot, you'll have to chat to the townsfolk, who often reveal new locations or clues as to where you should be heading for next. Fortunately, none of the pointers are very cryptic — in fact, most of them are downright blatant.

For example, after you've escaped from the Funfrock nut-house, you quickly make your way back to your house to see your girlfriend. Unfortunately, the Groboclones track you down, arrest you both and dump you back in jail. Undeterred, you escape again (using the same technique, I might add) and when you ask the locals about Zoe, they tell you to head for the tavern.

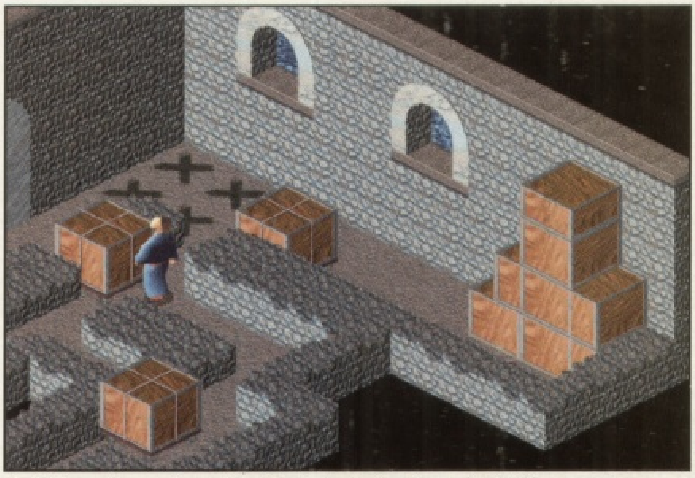
At the tavern, you discover a friendly elephant who, after you've bought him a tongue-loosening drink, informs you that he saw Zoe being taken to the docks. With this information, you next dash for the ferry. But you need a ticket to get on and you can't buy one because the rabbit at the ticket office will recognise you and sound the alarm. What the hell do you do?

Searching the flowerpots, cupboards and litter bins dotted about the gameworld, can reveal a variety of useful items. Most of them contain little red hearts which replenish your energy bar, while others may hold gold coins (Kashes) which you can use to buy other useful objects in various shops and taverns. Keys can also be found which allow you to open locked doors, while finding small blue bottles increases your magical energy bar.

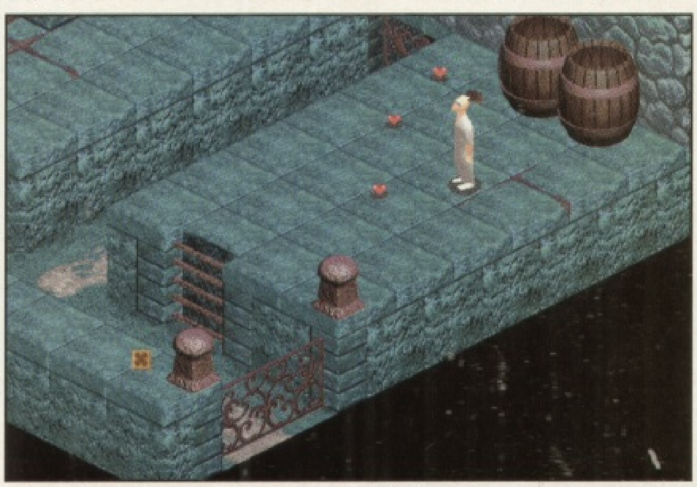
Magical energy is quite important. Although Twinsen doesn't carry a gun, he does have a special yellow ball of power with boomerang-like propereties which, once located, can be used as a weapon. However, it's only effective when there's enough stored magical energy to power it. Granted, it's not as destructive as the machine gun or the homing bomb but, when you've found

It's a bit like...

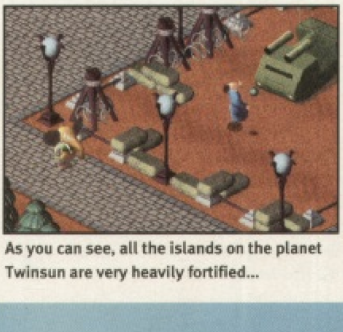
...Alone in the Dark 1, 2 or 3. With their static backdrops, similar control system and polygon-based characters, LBA and the Alone saga have much in common. The original Alone In The Dark game is still the best — a tense, atmospheric game pitting detective Edward Carnby against horrible hellspawn. But Alone 2 is a blast and look out for Alone 3 — it promises to be just as good.



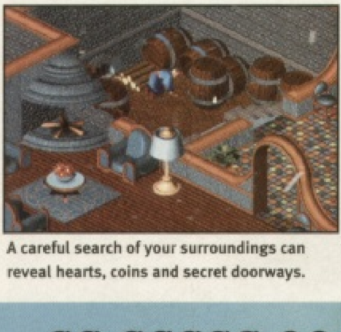
In addition to the questing and the Alone In The Dark-style combat, LBA also contains some simple puzzles. Here Twinsen must arrange four crates on the crosses to win a ferry ticket.



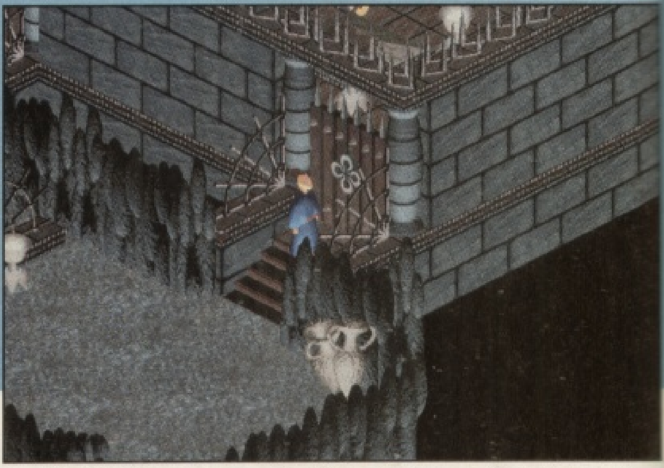
Twinsen's health is replenished by finding small red hearts, but if you can find an empty four-leaf clover box like this one and then a four-leaf clover to go in it, you gain an extra life.



As you can see, all the islands on the planet Twinsun are very heavily fortified...



A careful search of your surroundings can reveal hearts, coins and secret doorways.



The action is LBA takes place in a variety of different environments. Not only do you visit the principal towns, but desert outposts, snowy wastes and even underground temples.

the ball, at least you can start to fight back. As the game progresses and you solve puzzles, you move up magical 'levels', which extend the energy bar and allow you to add more firepower to your attacks.

But despite having a weapon, it's important to be cautious. Show your face too often and you'll find that the guards will open fire and the horrible Groboclones with their homing bombs will teleport in and take away that thing you affectionately called 'life'.

The attention to detail in LBA is absolutely remarkable. The game itself takes place over 12 chapters, each separated by cinematic-style cutscenes (above) and all rendered on Silicon Graphics workstations. The isometric-3D graphics are stunning and, while they lack incidental animation and some movement, the detail and the intricacy of them is superb.

All of the conversations in the game are digitised too, and each character has its own particular set of mannerisms. The guards shout in a lifeless monotone voice, the rabbits often squeak with a nervous stutter, while the elephant's speech is slow and very carefully constructed.

And all the characters have their own distinct behaviour patterns too — it's almost as if the people you meet during the game actually have their own lives and feelings. Okay, this may sound a bit far-fetched but say, for example, you try to attack a friendly elephant. First of all it will try to defend itself, but when it gets a chance, it will run around the corner to report you to a guard. As you watch, the elephant whispers to the guard, who then readies his rifle and comes in search of you.

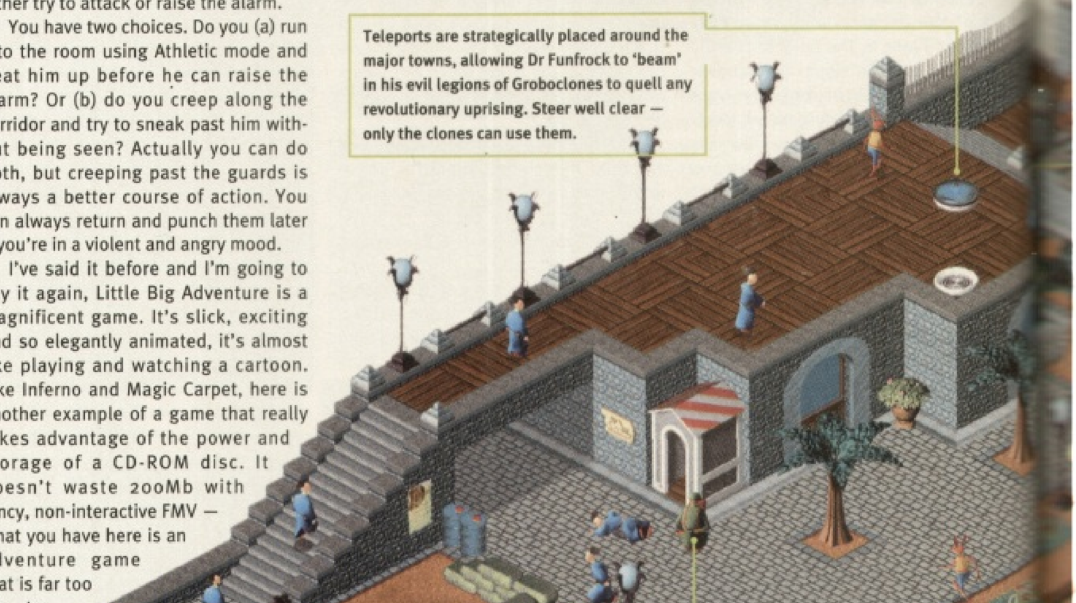
Realism is the watchword in LBA and so, as the military are looking for you, if you wander into a guard's field of vision, you can expect him to open fire and try to kill you. This character programming throws up an interesting gameplay feature in that you can use the Discreet mode to creep behind guards without being seen. For example, in the asylum at the beginning of the game, Twinsen must cross a corridor patrolled by an orderly. If he makes a noise the guard will spot him and either try to attack or raise the alarm.

You have two choices. Do you (a) run into the room using Athletic mode and beat him up before he can raise the alarm? Or (b) do you creep along the corridor and try to sneak past him without being seen? Actually you can do both, but creeping past the guards is always a better course of action. You can always return and punch them later if you're in a violent and angry mood.

I've said it before and I'm going to say it again, Little Big Adventure is a magnificent game. It's slick, exciting and so elegantly animated, it's almost like playing and watching a cartoon. Like Inferno and Magic Carpet, here is another example of a game that really takes advantage of the power and storage of a CD-ROM disc. It doesn't waste 200Mb with fancy, non-interactive FMV — what you have here is an adventure game that is far too big to fit on a set of floppy disks, and therefore an ideal candidate for a CD game.

With its wealth of quirky characters, different vehicles to drive and plot that moves from tortuous to downright complicated, LBA doesn't need me to think up fancy complements and poetic plaudits. Just know that it's a bloody brilliant game. I had a crowd of seven watching me play it and I haven't had an audience like that since Day Of The Tentacle reduced us to hysterics six months ago.

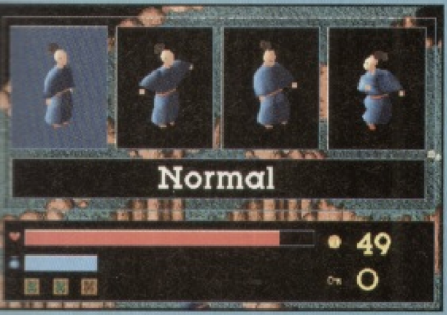
What more can I say? Look at the pictures, play the demo on the CD and, if you haven't yet invested in a CD-ROM drive, then I would seriously urge you to consider it — you really wouldn't want to miss out on a game as good as this one.



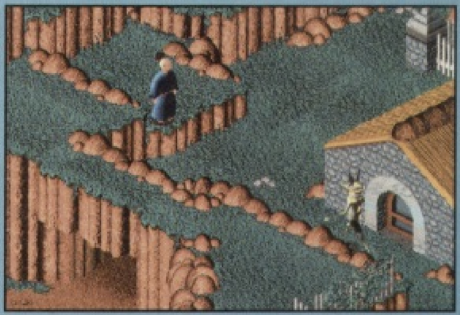
Teleports are strategically placed around the major towns, allowing Dr Funfrock to 'beam' in his evil legions of Groboclones to quell any revolutionary uprising. Steer well clear — only the clones can use them.

Guards (armed with rifles) are numerous but stupid. This one diligently guards the path to the ferry.

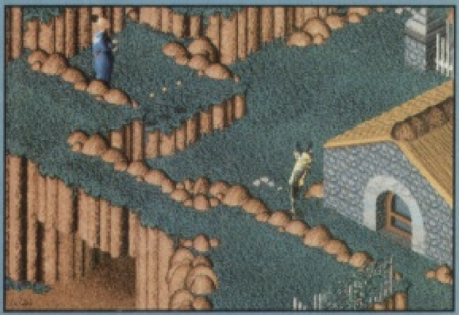
Like any megalomaniac, Dr Funfrock is deeply suspicious of his people. He tabs on them with surveillance robots that happily shoot anybody that moves! Just stand still when it rolls by.



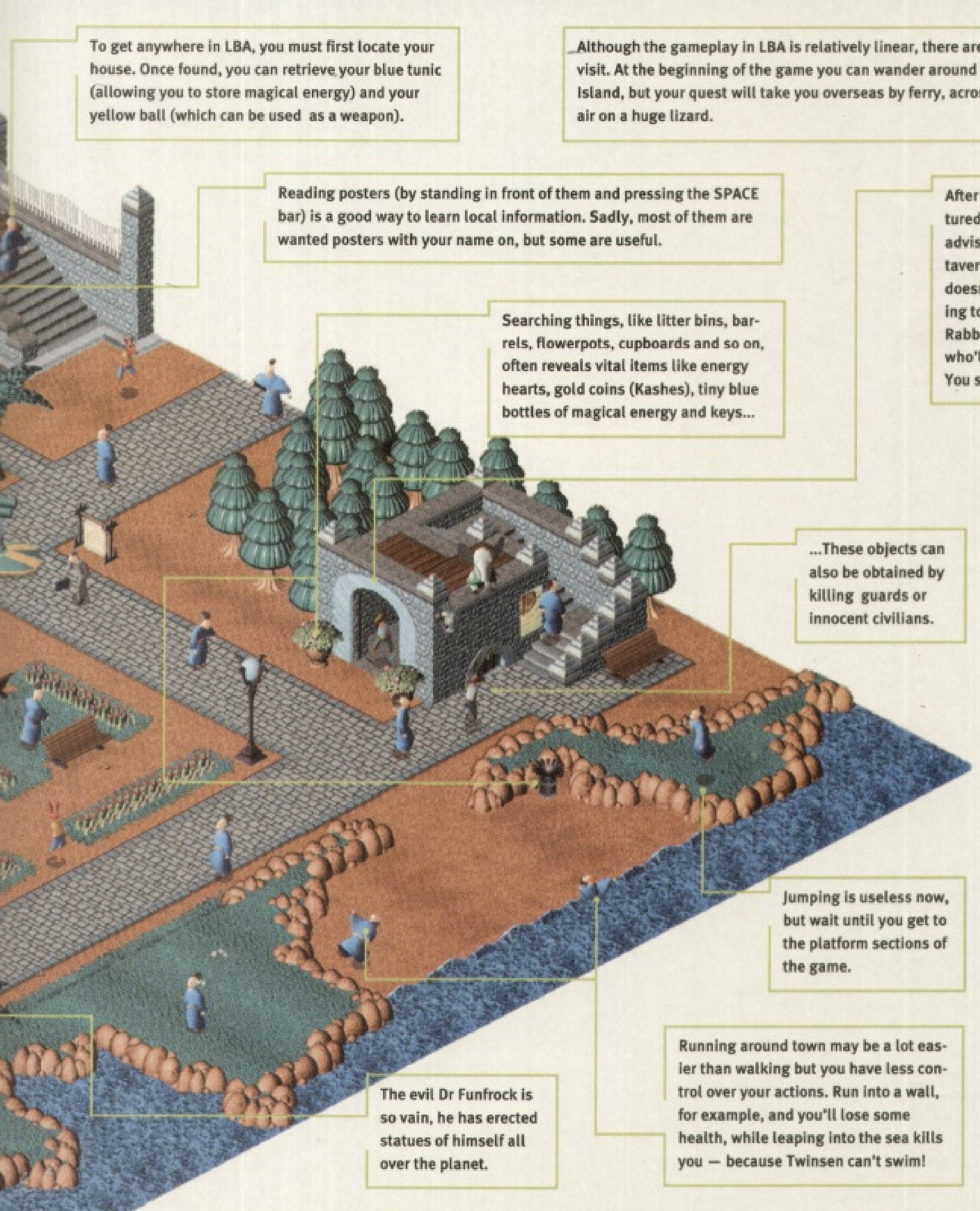
ressing the CTRL key calls up the behaviour menu. Your ash, keys, health and magic power are also detailed here.



Dr Funfrock has a variety of baddies at his disposal. He can clone any race on the planet, but has a fondness for robots...



...Robots can't be fooled and once they start firing, you'd better have quick reactions or you'll end up back in the slammer.



To get anywhere in LBA, you must first locate your house. Once found, you can retrieve your blue tunic (allowing you to store magical energy) and your yellow ball (which can be used as a weapon).

Although the gameplay in LBA is relatively linear, there are a lot of different locations to visit. At the beginning of the game you can wander around the heavily-fortified Citadel Island, but your quest will take you overseas by ferry, across land by buggy and up into the air on a huge lizard.

Reading posters (by standing in front of them and pressing the SPACE bar) is a good way to learn local information. Sadly, most of them are wanted posters with your name on, but some are useful.

After your girlfriend Zoe has been captured by the Groboclones, you are advised to make your way to the local tavern. Unfortunately, the barman doesn't know anything, but after talking to the waiter and the Irish Rabbibunny upstairs, you find a Grobo who'll help you if you buy him a drink. You see, cash does come in handy...

Searching things, like litter bins, barrels, flowerpots, cupboards and so on, often reveals vital items like energy hearts, gold coins (Kashes), tiny blue bottles of magical energy and keys...

...These objects can also be obtained by killing guards or innocent civilians.

Jumping is useless now, but wait until you get to the platform sections of the game.

Running around town may be a lot easier than walking but you have less control over your actions. Run into a wall, for example, and you'll lose some health, while leaping into the sea kills you — because Twinsen can't swim!

The evil Dr Funfrock is so vain, he has erected statues of himself all over the planet.

Twinsun is populated by a strange assortment of Alice In Wonderland-type characters: the Rabbibunnies are a nervous lot, often found in taverns drinking ale to calm down; the Grobos (the elephants) are a lot more laid back; while the Spheros (small pumpkins with legs) tend to favour intellectual pursuits like astronomy. Twinsen is a Quetch and there aren't many of them around.

LITTLE BIG ADVENTURE

ELECTRONIC ARTS/ADELINE

(0753) 549442

£44.99 OUT NOW

MINIMUM SPEC

25MHz 486, SVGA, 4Mb RAM, 10Mb of hard disk space and CD-ROM drive.

ALSO SUPPORTS

Sound Blaster, Gravis Ultrasound, MT32 MIDI and Ad Lib soundcards.

THE GOOD...

- Just look at these high-resolution Super VGA graphics — they're nothing less than gorgeous.
- The animation is superb.
- Then there's the digitised speech, the humour, the Alone In The Dark-style violence...
- ...Not too mention the attention to detail, the animated cutscenes and the brilliantly atmospheric soundtrack.

...AND THE BAD

- Nothing. Zip. Nil. Nada.

Overall

95%

Lode Runner

David Upchurch wanders down memory lane with Sierra's revamped 80s' classic.

Lode Runner is one of the most fondly remembered 80s' 'classics' — and now it's back, courtesy of Sierra. But while it now sports all-new 256-colour SVGA graphics, exotic power-ups, animated cut-scenes and all the other modern PC essentials, the gameplay remains nearly identical.

In Lode Runner you play Jake Peril, a top bounty hunter, whose task it is to raid the vaults of the Evil Empire and 'recover' (i.e. steal) as much loot as possible. Out to stop you are the Mad Monks, mysterious shrouded figures who patrol each vault's ladders and walkways in search of greedy intruders.

Fortunately, you're armed with a laser-blaster. Unfortunately, it's useless against the Monks. However, it is very handy for blowing holes in the floor and, if you time it right, you can fool the stupid Monks into falling into these pits, trapping them briefly and giving you time to grab more treasure. Once you've collected all the treasure in each single-screen vault, a magical gateway will appear to the next vault.

As you progress through the game's 150 vaults (or levels) things get tougher, with more complicated screen layouts to navigate, more Monks to avoid, and further hazards to contend with, like bedrock platforms that can't be blasted through and tar patches which slow you down. There are even some levels which are pitch black, and all you can see is a small, illuminated area around Jake.

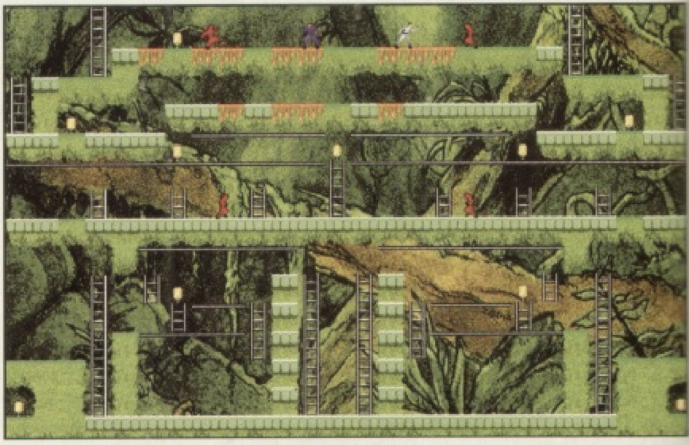
But it's not all one-sided in favour of the Empire and the Mad Monks. Every so often Jake will find special tools that he can pick up and use against the Empire's minions, like bombs, snares and befuddlement gas.

Basically Lode Runner is an arcade puzzler, similar in many ways to Lemmings. Like the Psygnosis game, success relies less on pure platform skills (although sharp reactions are required from time to time) and more on finding the right way to get through each level using the tools available.

And, like Lemmings, Lode Runner's graphics are small but incredibly well-animated — watching Jake set up a snare, for example, is a joy to behold. If anything, though, they're a little *too* small — sometimes it's hard to keep track of the Monks as they wander about, especially as they occasionally blend in with the backgrounds.

Lode Runner also lacks Lemmings' frantic tension — ambling around the vaults, picking up treasure, doesn't quite have the same addictive 'hook' as trying to keep tabs on all those *ker-razy* rodents, and the game has a tendency to get slightly repetitive, despite the appearance of new tools and problems.

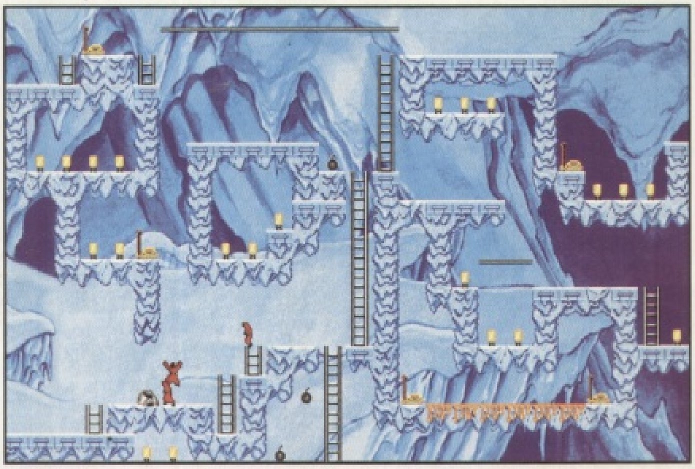
Another problem is the fact that you can freely cheat and skip past any levels that are giving you a real headache. You forfeit your right to see the animations between every fifteenth level by doing so, but that's no hardship as they're not that interesting anyway.



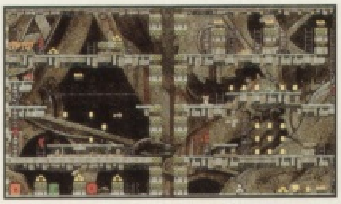
Meet Jake's fellow Lode Runner, Wes Reckless. In the two-player levels, you can compete for treasure — although you'll often be forced to cooperate if you're ever going to survive.

But the downside of this feature is that there's no real incentive for weak-willed players to try and solve each level. I know some might say you should resist the temptation, but be honest — if you've been stumped by a level for *days*, would you really be able to?

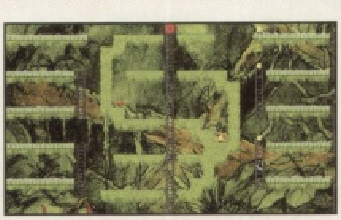
Don't get me wrong — Lode Runner *is* fun for a while, but it's likely to be a little too unsophisticated for the tastes of today's gamers. Sadly, Lode Runner is one blast from the past that should've stayed down in the vaults, along with the Evil Empire's booty.



When you get bored of the 150 levels already provided, you can create your own using the level editor included with the game. Amaze your friends with your creative skills!



This is one of Lode Runner's final levels — don't ask me how to solve it, I haven't a clue.



Some levels have locked exits, so you have to get the key before you can escape.

LODE RUNNER

SIERRA/PRESAGE

(0734) 303322

£34.99 OUT NOW

MINIMUM **SPEC**

20MHz 386, VGA, 2Mb RAM and 12Mb of hard disk space.

ALSO **SUPPORTS**

Mouse; joystick; Sound Blaster, Thunderboard and Pro Audio Spectrum soundcards.

THE GOOD...

- The tiny sprites are well animated.
- Initially quite enjoyable.
- The level editor allows for virtually limitless fun.

...AND THE BAD

- Sprites are so tiny that they're a real pain to keep track of.
- Lacks the addictive tension of similar puzzlers, such as Lemmings.
- The level selector means there's no real incentive to try hard.

Overall

70%

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AVAILABLE FOR IBM PC COMPATIBLES

MASTER OF MAGIC™

MICROPROSE

Quarantine CD

Alex Fraser hails a cab — and gets sliced in two by a buzzsaw — in GameTek's 'Doom for taxi drivers'.

"Aow Carolinaaa da-daaa-da... 'Course, I 'ad Henry Kissinger in the back o' my cab once — I put 'im straight on a fing or two. Yeah. Over 'ere all right is it? Cheers. Ta-ta, mate!"

This is the cheery face of the urban taxi driver — but for how much longer? In Quarantine we find ourselves in a nightmare scenario of a horror tomorrow. Pollution and the actions of a sinister corporation have turned a city's population into psychotic zombies, and you, an honest cabby, must rely on armour plating and heavy calibre weapons to survive on the streets.

The days of smiles and topical discussion are over! Stony-faced and without offering to help with heavy luggage, you patrol Kemo City in a hover-taxi, trying to earn a crust by picking up all sorts of psycho freak-cakes, navigating the 3D labyrinth of strife-torn streets, and delivering them to their destinations within a specified time.

The times specified are usually pretty tight (like, 45 seconds tight), so you have to know where you're going and really put your foot down because late-arriving customers tend to knock dollars off your fare. If you start to run into serious overtime you can cut your losses by hitting the ejector button and catapulting the passenger into the middle of the road, then run over him.

Keeping yourself flush with cash is all important because you need to keep your cab tooled up with guns and ammo — and free from bullet holes, if possible. The city is replete with automated Weapon King stores and service centres where you can have your damage repaired, fit armoured body panels and stock up on various kinds of exotic military hardware — missiles, napalm launchers, bonnet-mounted buzzsaws, that sort of thing.

That sort of thing is necessary because danger is rife — RIFE! I say — throughout the city. For a start there are those street gangs I told you about, armies of digitised sprites with glowing red eyes who jump off rooftops and throw Molotov cocktails at you.

These guys are easily creamed with a burst of machine gun fire or a few rounds from your Uzi which you can fire through your side windows. They're equally vulnerable to being driven over, and the resultant splootch of blood on your windscreen is not pleasant and definitely wouldn't endear this game to old folk.

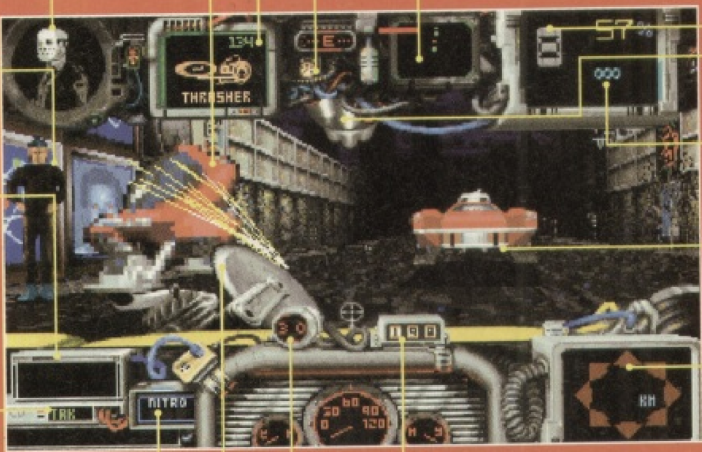
Larger weapons are required to deal with the battalions of paranoid maniac drivers who bounce you off the road, dodgem-style, drop mines on the road in front of you, launch missiles up your exhaust pipe or simply park across the middle of the road, blocking it until you cut their car into slices with your Punisher cannon. Nobbling a speeding auto is quite impressive as, after a brief wobble, they spin off and explode at the roadside. BOOM! Ho-ho.

The overall objective of Quarantine is never quite made clear, though as the game progresses it becomes apparent that you have to help undermine and overthrow the evil Omnicorp by carrying out missions for an anti-Omnicorp terrorist gang. In between the mundane 'Take me home, buddy' fares, you occasionally get a special task, such as driving a bomb to a TV station, or seeking and destroying Omnicorp stool pigeons.

After six or seven of these missions the 'good guys' give you a password so that you can get into an underground maze which leads to the restricted up-

The **PC GAMES** *School Of Motoring*

High Mortality Rate. Nervous Pupils Not Catered For In The Slightest. All Lessons Begin With Gratuitous Dashboard Illustration.



Special Weapon: Toggle through them — the Thrasher buzzsaw is active.

Hoverbike: Soon to be a heap of burning scrap.

Compass: Shows where you're going — obviously.

Car Radar: Shows incoming obstacles/targets/road-going coffins.

Car Damage: I'll have to be off to the service centre soon.

Current Punter: Obviously a doctor.

'The Punisher': A nice big gun. Mmm — yummy.

Innocent Bystander: Be careful not to drive over him. 'Today's roadkill could have been tomorrow's punter'.

Armour: The devils have knocked it all off, but I can get some more.

Fare Box: Blank here, because, er, it went blank whenever we took a grab. Damn these new-fangled games!

Another Car: Also known as 'The One That Got Away'.

CD Track: In the CD version you can play music from any CD you like, though if you go to the map screen the game forgets to restart the tunes when you come back.

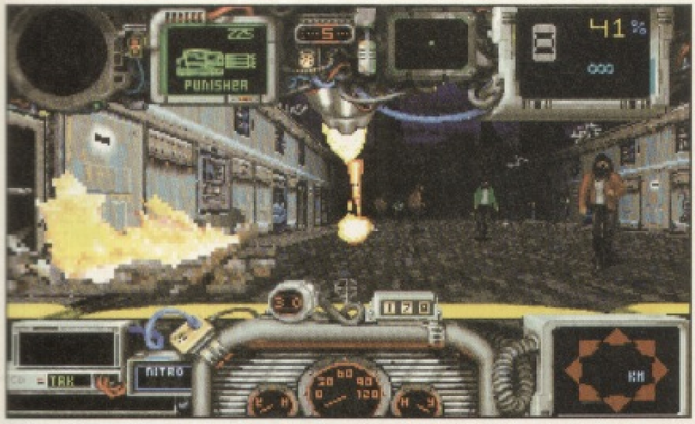
Wayfinder: Points to the location selected on the map, and shows how far away it is.

Nitro Boost: Ain't got none here, but you can pack up to three power-pepper-uppers.

Bullets: An ammo counter for your bonnet-mounted machine guns. When it runs low, head for the weapons store for a reload — and quick!

Thrasher In Action: Sparks fly as I chop up this guy's hoverbike. Not so cocky now, eh?

Battery Power: Batteries let you drive off the grid of roads, but only briefly.



Bothered by zombie gangsters? Turn them from Street Punk to Moist Chunk, all at the touch of a button — thanks to The Punisher! From your local Weapon King store.

town areas where more daring deeds need doing. Getting enough missions to boost you to the second 'level' isn't difficult (thanks to the 'save game' feature), but it takes a while.

Once you've got a sniff of the interesting stuff, the regular fares become a bit of a drag and feel like time killers. It's also a bit irksome that one of the hardest things about the game, certainly in the first two levels, is navigating the streets in the time limit. Each 'level' is self-contained but it's still pretty big, and though you tend to remember general routes after a while, you do have to keep pausing to call up the street map when your short cut leads you up to a miles-long impassable wall.

There are navigational aids on the dashboard, such as a compass and a direction finder which points to a programmed destination, but what's really needed is a sort of short-range scrolling map to give you an idea of how close you are to that turn-off.

In spite of these flaws, though, I have to admit that Quarantine could not be described as 'unimpressive' — the 3D texture-mapped graphics are very nice, the little guys and the cars look good, the scenery is detailed and the animation is fast, making the 3D view through the windshield quite realistic. If you're playing in high detail mode on a low-end 486 the scrolling isn't too smooth, but the game is still playable, and you can always switch to the smoother, chunkier low-res mode.

Sound is put to good use, too. The weapon effects are really meaty, adding a lot to the destructive ambience of the whole game. You have to listen out for potential punters whistling and calling at you, and the CD version of the game even comes with nine music tracks on the disc which range from authentic-sounding grunge rock to a sort of light jazz — which sounds spectacularly sinister when it's mixed with the screams of crushed psychos.

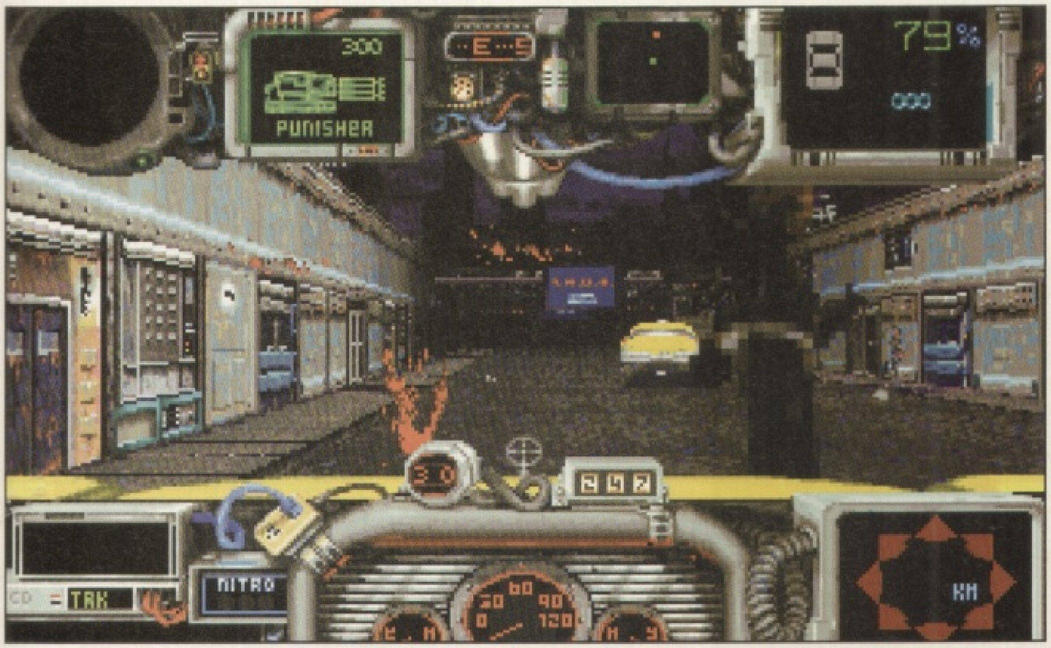
If you install the whole game to hard disk (15Mb required, fact fans) you can even stick your own musical favourites in the drive, though the game crashed when it got to track nine of my Seal album. Now why's that, eh?

The CD version of Quarantine also earns presentation points for its full-motion video intro — or at least it would if I'd been able to see it. All I got was the whole picture crushed into the top centimetre of the screen which, according to the README.TXT file, means my video card doesn't support the correct graphics mode. Owners of the commonly-used Cirrus Logic 5420-series boards should therefore beware.

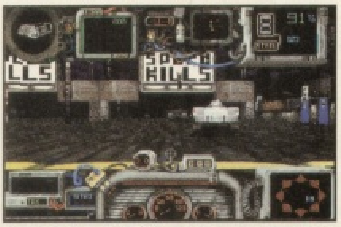
I've seen Quarantine described as 'Doom in a taxi' (though not by Gametek — they've learned from the Corridor 7 mistake), and maybe that's what you're expecting, but it doesn't really live up to the epithet. The only similarity between Quarantine and Doom is the copious amounts of violence — big guns, explosions, screams of agony, splattered bodies and blood all over the place.

But it's almost like that's all the programmers wanted to give you — the opportunity to run people over and blow up cars — because for the most part the action underlying it all turns out to be a bit too much like a simulation of... driving a taxi! Pick someone up. Get a bit lost. Drop them off. Cruise around looking for the next punter.

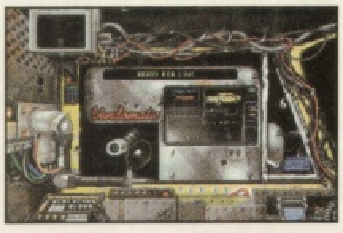
True, you do get the more interesting missions, but they're quite few and far between and even then they aren't exactly laden with excitement. I guess this game is best suited to drivers who regularly get steamed when someone carves them up on the motorway, and who have one of those electronic swearing boxes on the dashboard of their car. For them, no doubt it'll be great therapy, but for the rest of us... I'm not so sure.



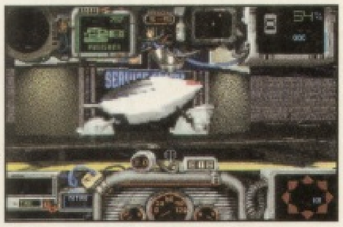
Whups! Sorry mate! Didn't see yer in them dark clothes. You want to carry a newspaper or summink.



On the freeway it's not just speed that kills — the mines, floating bombs, missiles and maniac drivers also contribute to the mayhem. Blimey.



Would you like fries to go with that, sir?



Cyclists — the driver's worst nightmare.

QUARANTINE CD

GAMETEK/IN-HOUSE

(0753) 553445

£39.99 OUT NOW

MINIMUM SPEC

25MHz 386, VGA, 4Mb RAM, 1Mb of hard disk and double-speed CD-ROM drive.

ALSO SUPPORTS

Sound Blaster, Pro Audio Spectrum, Roland, SoundMaster 2 and ThunderBoard soundcards, amongst many others.

THE GOOD...

- Excellent graphics and sounds — even the CD tracks aren't bad.
- Loads of great meaty weapons.
- Very violent indeed.

...AND THE BAD

- Somehow the excitement never hits fever pitch.
- Very violent indeed.

Overall

79%

Aces Of The Deep

Torpedo, los! Join Oberleutnant Dean Evans as he sinks Allied shipping in Sierra's U-Boat sim.

Between September 1939 and May 1945, Germany launched over 1,000 U-Boats into combat against the Allies. These submersible war machines, deadly phantoms of the deep, prowled the stormy seas, striking without warning at Allied shipping. We've had countless black and white movies about them and even a few games, including the dull (but very realistic) Silent Service II and the classic 688 Attack Sub.

And here to join them is Sierra's Aces Of The Deep, which allows you command a German U-Boat in single or campaign missions against Allied shipping during World War Two. Like Aces Of The Pacific and Aces Over Europe, AOD is very well-presented, featuring a variety of gameplay options and realism levels that allow novice and the submarine veteran alike to prowl the icy waters of the North Atlantic and sink tankers with something approaching wild abandon.

And 'wild abandon' is not something you usually associate with a sub sim. Although playing the deep-sea equivalent of Chess with a 20,000-tonne propeller-driven tube remains very popular, it's not exactly as thrilling as flying through an asteroid field in a starfighter or driving the wrong way around the circuit in the Indianapolis 500. In a submarine game, most of your time is often spent hiding on the sea-bed, listening to the whirr of propellers and the echoing ping of the sonar.

But despite this, Aces Of The Deep is a very absorbing and playable game. Like any other submarine sim, the gameplay is straightforward but very difficult to master, and this is true whether you choose to play a single mission — you can pick from historical, convoy attack and warship encounter categories — or a full-blown campaign.

Unlike many other sub sims, there's very little waiting around involved, as AOD's time compression utility allows you to speed up the game by a massive 4095 times. There's also no complex mathematics involved and no calculating intercept courses — the torpedo targeting device seems to do everything for you. It's so simple, I sank three ships on my first trip out from the Kiel submarine pens.

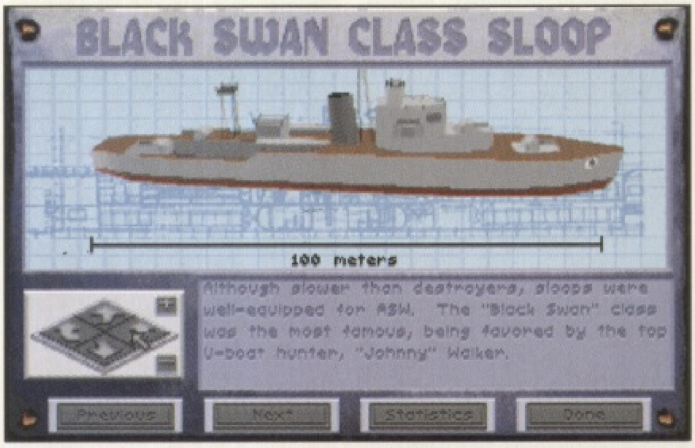
But that said, I did have the game on Easy mode. Like the other Aces titles, AOD is an extremely flexible sim and the realism of the game can be tweaked and customised in a number of different ways. For example, if you want to fight an ultra-realistic battle, then switching on all the options will give you a game where your torpedoes might fail to explode and where the Allied Destroyers are 90% lethal. But if you'd like things a touch simpler and a bit more forgiving, you can make your submarine invulnerable, give yourself an endless supply of diesel fuel or even unlimited ammo.

AOD is a comprehensive game that also plays very well, and Dynamix has made a particular effort to jazz up the graphics and the sound. The bridge, chart room, torpedo room, etc, are all easily accessed by a single key-press and the screens themselves make good use of digitised stills to convey the grimy, grey interior of the U-Boat.

The sound is also excellent, featuring digitised voices (which you can have speaking in English or German), a variety of soundtracks and, of course, the digitised sounds of propellers, sonar pings and the eerie death rattle of sinking Allied ships.

But what is most striking about AOD is the graphic detail once you reach the surface. Apart from the tremendously realistic rolling waves effect, Dynamix has used Gouraud-shaded polygons to create the shipping. Although they don't look half as good as the vessels in EA's superb SSN-21 Seawolf, because they aren't 2D bitmaps, a 9,000-tonne merchant ship will keel over and slide into the icy waters as I imagine a real 9,000-tonne merchant ship would. Not that I spend a lot of time thinking about this, you understand.

I've actually been pleasantly surprised by Aces Of The Deep. It's an enjoyable and very playable game that combines good visuals with a complex but intuitive strategy side. It's not very often that you get to command a German U-Boat — you can't command a British, American or French sub, before you ask — and so if you're looking for a good, solid challenge that recreates the nail-biting tension of submarine warfare then Aces Of The Deep gets the proverbial PC GAMES nod.

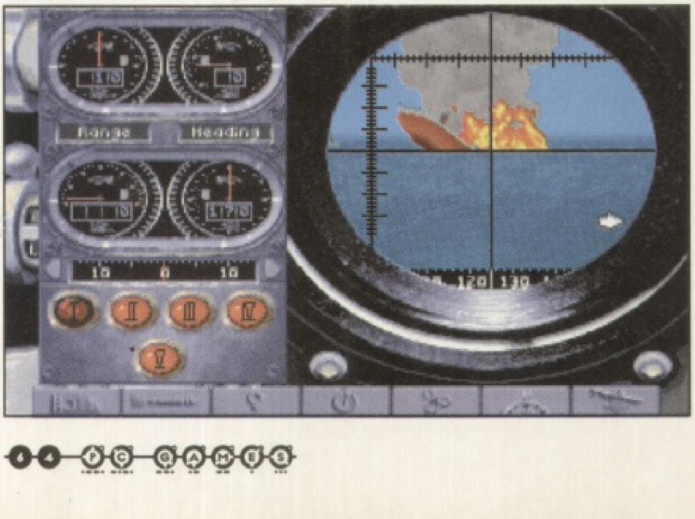

BLACK SWAN CLASS SLOOP

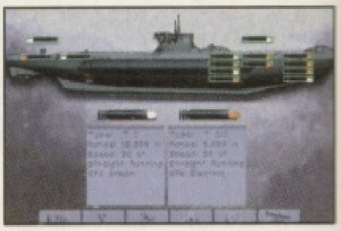
100 meters

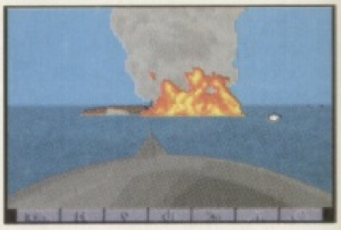
Although slower than destroyers, sloops were well-equipped for ASW. The "Black Swan" class was the most famous, being favored by the top U-boat hunter, "Johnny" Walker.

(Above) The vehicle preview option allows you to get to know all the enemy ships in detail.

(Below) Up periscope and it's torpedoes away. As you can see, the advantage of polygon-constructed ships is that they can explode brightly, keel over and slip noisily into the ocean.







(Above top) As the war drags on you have access to more powerful submarines, with deck guns, rear torpedo tubes and a greater dive depth.

(Above) Die English pig-dog. Schweinhund!

ACES OF THE DEEP

SIERRA/DYNAMIX

(0734) 303322

£39.99 OUT NOW

MINIMUM SPEC

33MHz 386, VGA, 4Mb RAM and 10Mb of hard disk space

ALSO SUPPORTS

Joystick; Sound Blaster, Pro Audio Spectrum, Roland and General MIDI soundcards.

THE GOOD...

- A good, faithful recreation of submarine warfare in World War Two that plays beautifully.
- The digital sound effects and speech are very atmospheric.
- The effect of the rolling ocean waves is superb.

...AND THE BAD

- Suffers from the same problem as any other submarine sim... i.e. it's all a bit dull.

Overall

85%

PIZZA $ TYCOON

Do you want to know what's cooking?

Do you knead to make some dough?

Then get a piece-of-the-action with Pizza Tycoon.

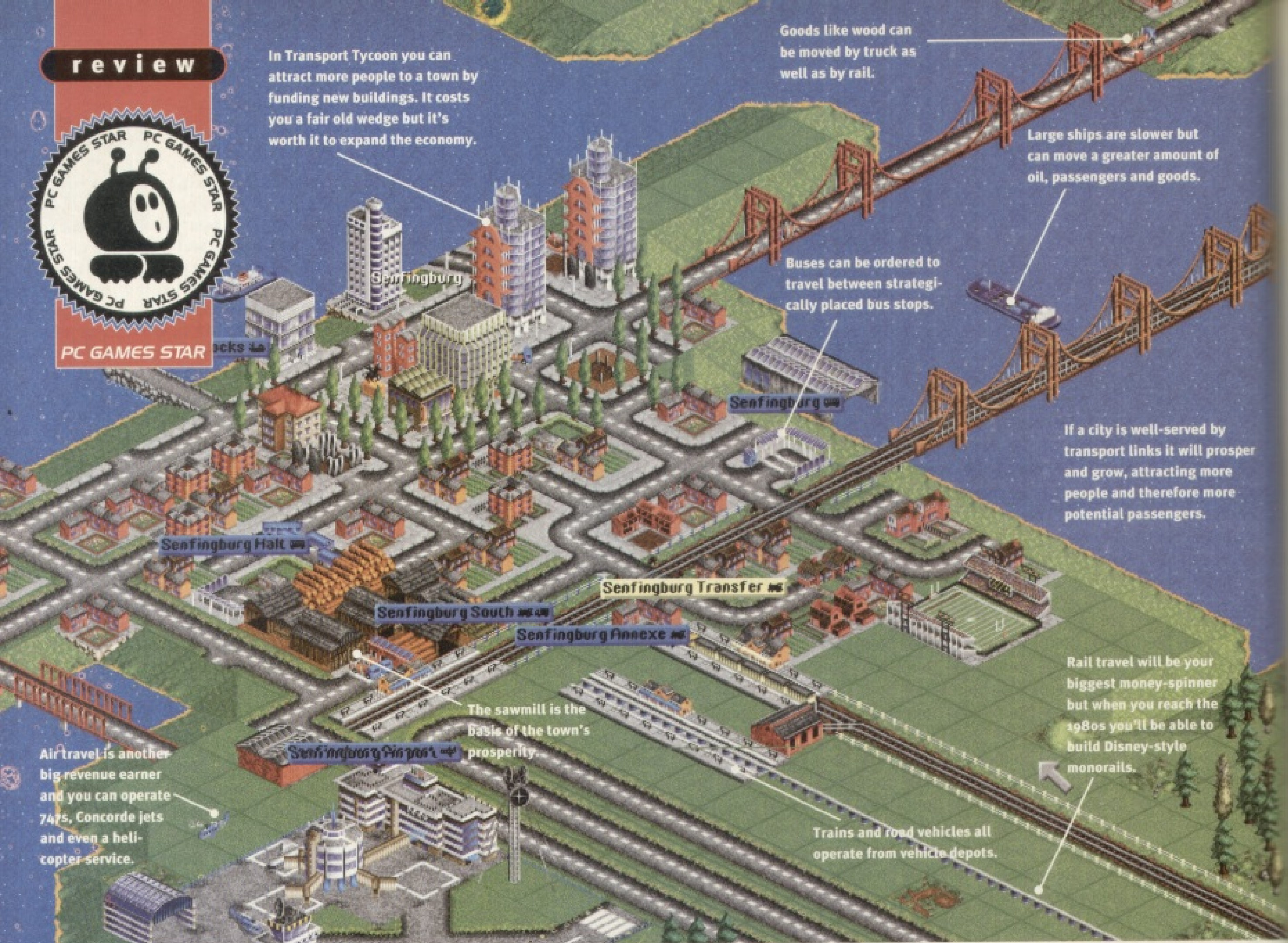
A business simulation to get your teeth into.

Order up **Pizza Tycoon** from us.

Because at MicroProse, we deliver.

AVAILABLE FOR IBM PC COMPATIBLES MICROPROSE

PC GAMES STAR



In Transport Tycoon you can attract more people to a town by funding new buildings. It costs you a fair old wedge but it's worth it to expand the economy.

Goods like wood can be moved by truck as well as by rail.

Large ships are slower but can move a greater amount of oil, passengers and goods.

Buses can be ordered to travel between strategically placed bus stops.

If a city is well-served by transport links it will prosper and grow, attracting more people and therefore more potential passengers.

Rail travel will be your biggest money-spinner but when you reach the 1980s you'll be able to build Disney-style monorails.

The sawmill is the basis of the town's prosperity.

Air travel is another big revenue earner and you can operate 747s, Concorde jets and even a helicopter service.

Trains and road vehicles all operate from vehicle depots.

Transport Tycoon

Dean Evans builds up the ultimate train set in MicroProse's answer to Sim City 2000.

Have you ever fancied running your own train network? How about a bus company? Or an airline, maybe? If you do, well, I'm happy to say that Transport Tycoon is the answer to all your wishes — it's an SVGA, isometric-3D strategy game that allows you to construct a complex, integrated transport network to put British Rail and Virgin Atlantic in the shade.

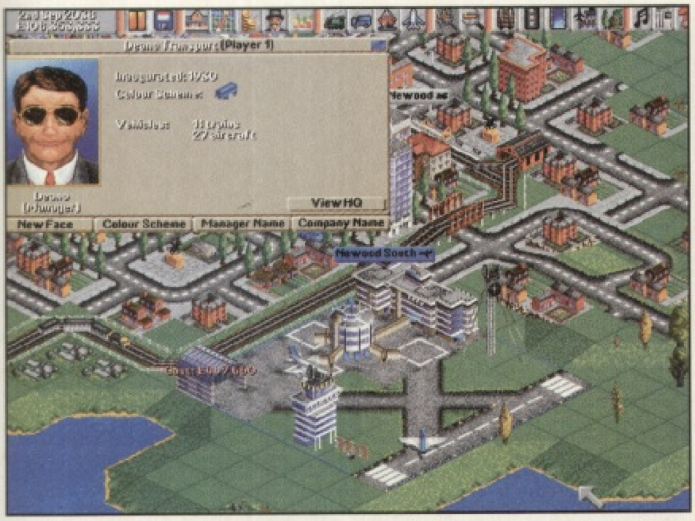
At first glance, Transport Tycoon, like Sim City 2000, *seems* ludicrously straightforward. Starting out with a sizeable chunk of venture capital, you've got to build up a thriving network of buses, trains, lorries and planes to service the tiny towns scattered around the gameworld. You've got £100,000 to invest, a whole world to dig up, bridges to build and, as time marches slowly onwards, a wide variety of new vehicles to add to your company fleet.

Transport Tycoon has a huge amount of depth to it and things aren't quite as simple as building a railway track, slapping down a few stations and hoping the cash will roll in. Life is made very difficult by the fact that up to seven computer competitors can join you in the battle for those lucrative transportation routes. So not only have you got to juggle your finances, fund new construction and initiate advertising campaigns to attract new customers, but you've also got to attempt to drive your opponents ruthlessly into the ground at the same time.

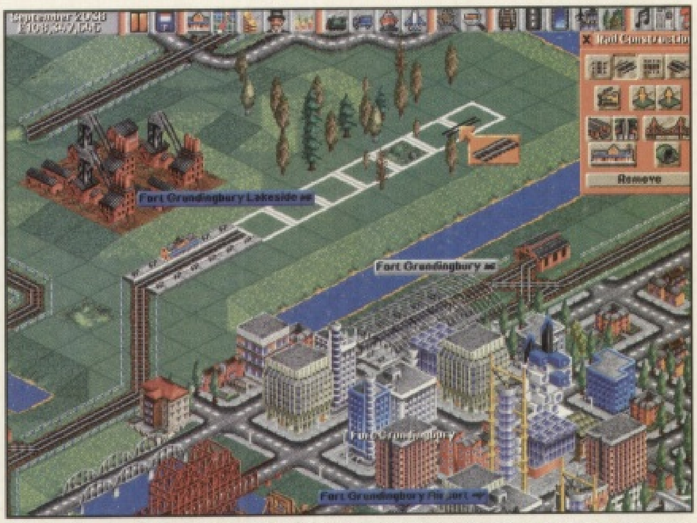
Obviously, success in Transport Tycoon is measured by profit margins, but building a couple of stations and running the odd passenger service between Sneffingdale and North Stifford isn't going to give you much of a return. You've got to think much bigger, because the largest profits are to be made by shunting goods between towns and industries.

So it's important to set up a few high-profit routes early on and shunting, for example, coal from a mine to a power-station, is a good way to get started. Setting this in motion is a simple matter of finding both a suitable mine and power-station, building a station next to both, connecting the two with track (raising or lowering the land Sim City-style), building a rail depot, buying an engine and some trucks to go with it and, finally, giving the train orders to shuttle from mine to power-station and back again.

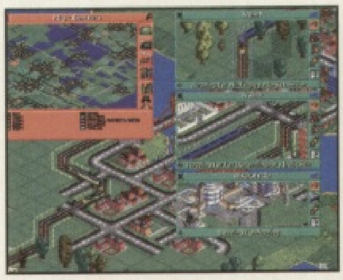
It's simplicity itself. Like Sim City 2000, the roads and railways are created by clicking on the appropriate icon and dragging the mouse pointer along the intended route. As for your trains, lorries, aeroplanes and ships, they are given orders in a similar way to the trains in Railroad



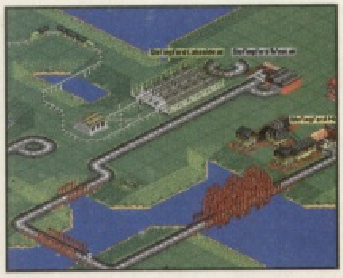
When founding your transport company, you can not only choose what you look like, but what colour-scheme your vehicles will be painted and where you will site your company HQ.



Like Sim City 2000, laying roads or railway lines is a simple matter of clicking on the appropriate icon and dragging the mouse pointer along the intended route.



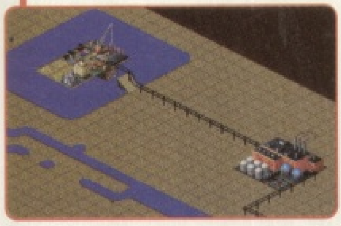
Build trains, planes and automobiles....



...and then add a monrail to top it all off.

It's a bit like...

...Ooh, lots of things... Sim City 2000, Railroad Tycoon, Airbucks — take your pick. But if you're looking for something in a similar isometric-3D style, something that you'll be able to play for months and months , then Maxis' Sim City 2000 is still the definitive software toy. Build up a thriving city from nothing, manage its economy, water and power needs. Simply great.



Tycoon. For example, you can instruct a bus to travel to a suburban bus stop, then tell it to wait until it has a full load of passengers before it returns to the bus stop in the city centre.

But even the simplest A to B journeys can run into unexpected problems. Each of your vehicles has a reliability rating and the lower the percentage score, the more likely it is to break down. You can't just buy new rolling stock and forget about it. Not only do you have to absorb the yearly running costs for your vehicles, you've also got to pay for them to be serviced or replaced if they go wrong.

But as the years roll by, new vehicles become available and, as your original fleet of steam trains and Dakota aircraft gets older and less dependable, you get the opportunity to replace them with faster, better-built models, like InterCity engines, Concorde jet aircraft and so on.

There are disasters to contend with as well and, rather than having the usual uninspiring floods and earthquakes (yawn), Transport Tycoon features various MicroProse-related horrors, like UFO's destroying your rail network, fighter submarines from Subwar 2050 sinking your shipping and F-14s that wheel in the sky taking pot-shots at your buses.

With over an hour of music, a multiplayer option and a wealth of stats, graphs and options, Transport Tycoon is both a brilliantly designed and superbly presented game. It's a stunning achievement, and there's so much going on in it that it's almost impossible to mention it all here. Suffice it to say, Transport Tycoon combines the best bits of Sim City, Railroad Tycoon and Airbucks, but does it all so much better.

To sum up, Transport Tycoon is hugely addictive, massively detailed and great fun to play. In short, it's bloody brilliant. And at a time when we're all going gaga over the prospect of the Gouraud-shaded, memory-chomping excellence of games like Wing Commander 3 and Creature Shock, it's refreshing to play a game that comes on two disks, doesn't take up three-quarters of your hard disk and probably has more gameplay than both of them.

I can confidently say that if you're a fan of Sim City 2000 or even Railroad Tycoon, then you'll love Transport Tycoon. It's easy to understand, simple to play and a huge strategic challenge. Buy it if you see it — you won't be disappointed.

TRANSPORT TYCOON

MICROPROSE/CHRIS SAWYER

(0454) 326532

£44.99 OUT NOW

MINIMUM SPEC

33MHz 386, SVGA, 4Mb RAM and 4Mb of hard disk space.

ALSO SUPPORTS

Mouse; Sound Blaster and Ad Lib soundcards.

THE GOOD...

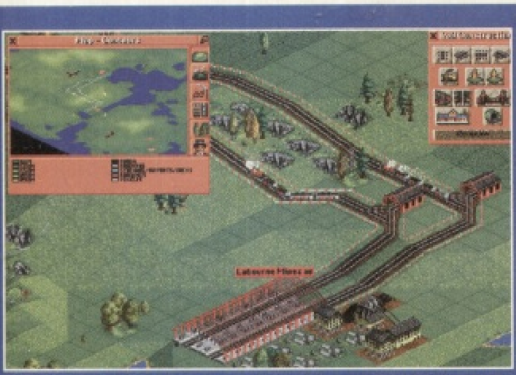
- A challenging blend of Sim City, Railroad Tycoon and Airbucks.
- A huge array of options and customisable features.
- Great SVGA graphics.
- Great sound and music.
- Just plain great, in fact.

...AND THE BAD

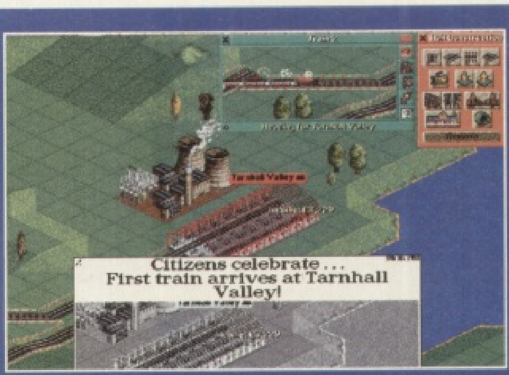
- Er, I'd like to be able to buy out the opposition when I want to and... oh, just forget it.

Overall

93%



Money making lesson No.1: Try to connect major industries together by rail, i.e. a forest and a saw-mill or a coal mine and power-station.



Citizens celebrate...
First train arrives at Tarnhall Valley!

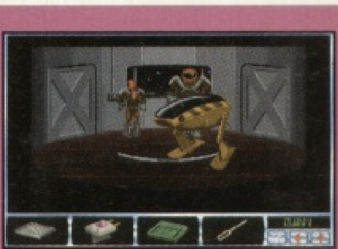
There's lots of money to be made if you can efficiently supply the needs of industry, and it might just make the nearby town grow too.

Return To Ringworld CD

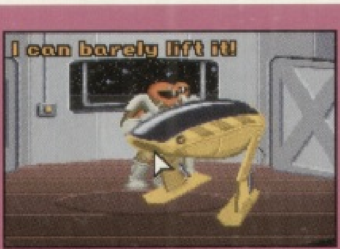
Alex Fraser displays his literary ignorance with Tsunami's sci-fi adventure sequel.

*Team*work!

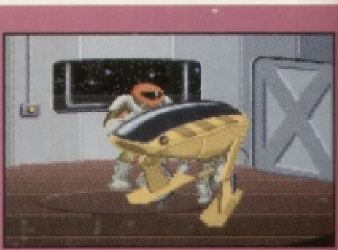
They're not often called on to do it, but the heroes of Return To Ringworld can work together to solve problems. Here we find Quinn and Seeker, stuck in an elevator that leads to Ringworld's innards.



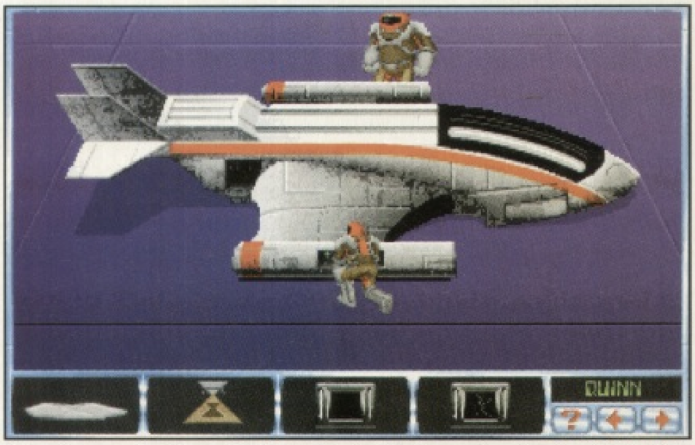
Blast and curses! That old seized-up robot is blocking access to the elevator control console in the floor!



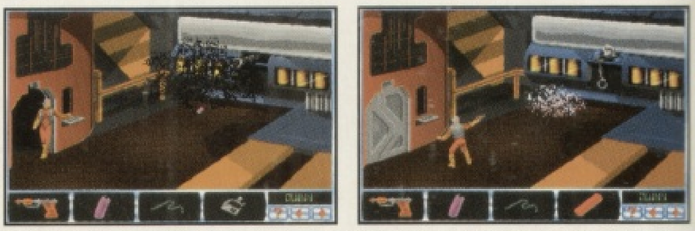
Even the big Kzin, Seeker, can't lift it off the panel. Obviously brute force isn't the answer... this requires lateral thinking.



Look, if Seeker can just lift it up a bit, Quinn can stick this pilot's air bag underneath the right leg.



Before they can enter Ringworld, Quinn and Seeker have to scour the external surface for bits to fix this smashed ship. This is one of the puzzles that requires a LOT of walking around.



This is the first big problem and — boy! — is it a doozy. The hyperdrive is knackered but you can't fix it until you get rid of a defense laser that's guarding it.

No self-respecting fan of science fiction will need any introduction to Larry Niven's Ringworld stories. I, on the other hand, am an uncultured oaf who only remembers Ringworld as the book he picked up in the Sixth Form library, then replaced in favour of Valley Of The Horses by Jean M. Auel, simply because it had rude bits in it.

So I apologise in advance to all you Nivenites, just in case I make a criticism that is obviously down to my ignorance of the original work. As the title suggests, this is the second of Tsunami's Ringworld games, in which we find that our heroes, Quinn, Miranda and Seeker, having saved the Puppeteers from the Kzinti, are now fugitives.

But wait a mo'. You probably don't know who all these people are, so let's have a quick precis. The action is set in the 27th Century, just after the humans have sorted out their differences with the Kzinti, a race of feline aliens, after 300 years of interstellar war.

The two sides decided they should work together to explore space and, to cement relations, the humans and Kzinti embarked on a joint project to build an ultra-fast space explorer. But little did the humans know that the Kzinti had discovered how, during the war, they had been allied to an ancient spacefaring race called the Puppeteers. This didn't sit well with the Kzinti leader, and he ordered his engineers to secretly build a duplicate of the new spaceship then arm it to the teeth so that it could destroy the Puppeteers' homeworlds.

To cut a long story short, our three stout heroes stole the original exploration vessel, The Lance Of Truth, fitted it with a few bits and pieces of ancient super-technology from the mysterious Ringworld, took off after the duplicate ship and destroyed it just in time for the end of the first game.

You might expect that, at the start of the second game, our heroes would be receiving medals, but instead, as I said, they're fugitives. The humans are mad about the theft of The Lance Of Truth, as are the Kzinti, who are also mad about their plot being thwarted.

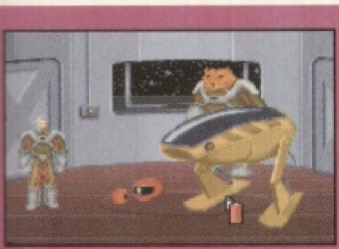
There are even some sinister political machinations in the Puppeteer camp, which has led to them putting a price on the heads of the trio. They decide to high-tail it back to Ringworld, where they hope to find some evidence which will clear their names and save their skins... but where, unbeknownst to them, and yet unsurprisingly, even more trouble awaits. Exciting, eh?

The plot pans out in the form of a point-and-click adventure which, being CD-based, is kitted out with rather a lot of locations, some fancy ray-traced story-telling bits and 'talkie' conversations between characters.

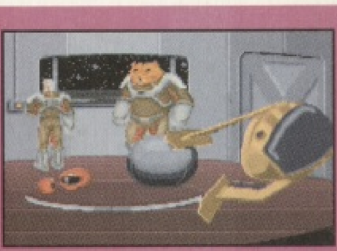
The command interface is all mouse-driven, of course, and is very simple to use. Click right and a half-dozen command icons appear, allowing you to walk, pick up/use objects and talk to characters. You can also switch between the three characters, either to take up different plot-lines when they get separated or so they can work together on a puzzle. So few commands may sound limiting, but they're context-sensitive and fairly flexible so you don't usually get stymied trying to work out whether to push, pull, use or pick up the pillow you're planning to stuff down the toilet.

The puzzles are pretty standard fare, about as difficult as the ones in, say, LucasArts' Day Of The Tentacle, but there are a good mix. There are a few quick and easy ones, some are exasperatingly convoluted and some seem to take an awful lot of walking around (which certainly makes you wish there was a 'Run' icon).

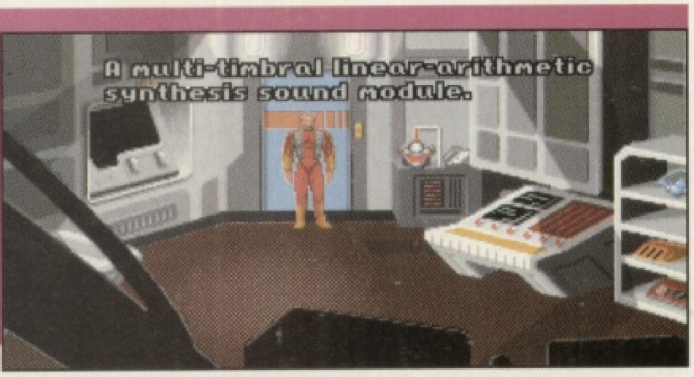
A lot of them seem to rely on you knowing something of the technology you find yourself carting around, so it's worth reading through the database in the ship's computer for clues when you can't work out how to generate a sonic



Now use Seeker's oxygen tank to pressurise the elevator... Hey! I think that we're on to something here...



...If we now use Quinn's oxygen tank to blow up the air bag... And then just give it a nudge and... over it goes!



A multi-timbral linear-arithmetic synthesis sound module.

The space jargon gets a little wearing, but you can usually get a lucid explanation of equipment functions from The Lance Of Truth's computer.

fold. The game also puts you in situations where you have to drive trains or negotiate labyrinthine transport systems, so it's not all just 'Use A with B'.

The plot is one of the game's best features, but then so you would expect, this being based on a novel by a renowned author. The story progresses apace, with several changes of scenery from The Lance Of Truth to numerous Ringworld locations giving the impression of a mighty long journey. There are a fair few unexpected developments along the way too, though of course they probably won't be unexpected if you've read the books.

The various characters come across pretty well, though the usual brand of bland acting is in evidence among some of the voice-over people. But what am I, eh? A drama critic? The sound and indeed the graphics are generally good, though. The scenery is tidy and the characters aren't bad either, though they don't half mince about if you get them to walk down the screen at certain angles. The ray-traced cut-scenes are the most eye-catching bits, of course, and some of them are quite spectacular.

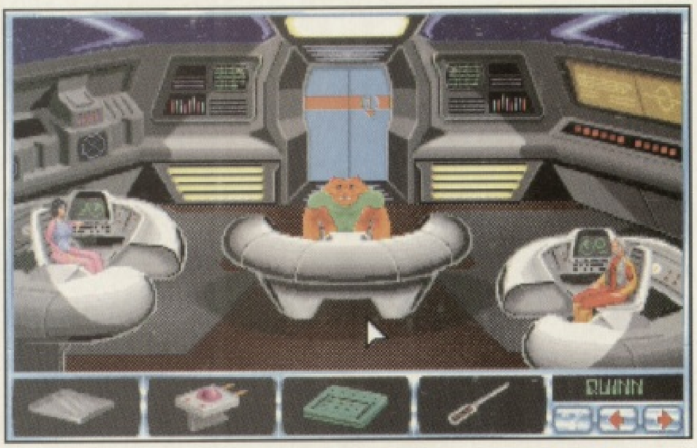
So, there are no major flaws in Return To Ringworld, but then there are no major innovations either. The action is varied and interesting, the game itself is well programmed and it looks good, but personally I would rather play Beneath A Steel Sky, which is easier to get into and more interesting to play.

I've no doubt, though, that Niven adherents, already familiar with the characters and the events before the start of the game, will get quite a kick out of finding themselves taking part in such a good representation of their favourite yarn.

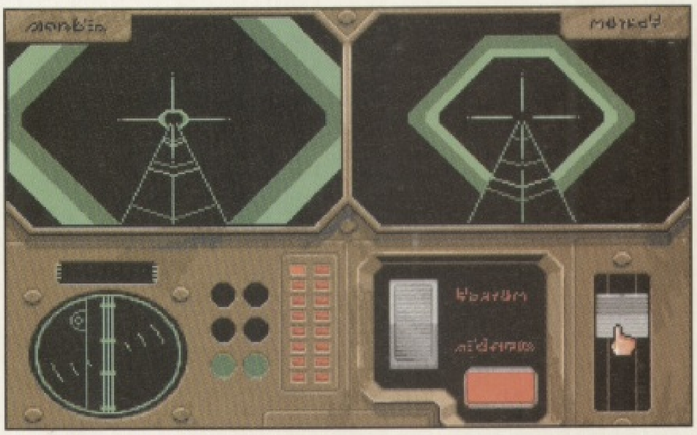
It's a bit like...

These days, just about every adventure game looks a bit like Return To Ringworld. Having said that, though, there aren't many SF talkie games on CD, so I'd have to say it was most akin to Beneath A Steel Sky, which I found a bit more engaging than this one, though I guess it would be the other way around if I was a Larry Niven fan.

You've made a MISTAKE.
I'm not OVERMANN*



Our heroes on the bridge of The Lance Of Truth. Miranda (left) is the spunky engineer, Seeker (centre) is the ship's tough Kzin captain and Quinn (right) is a rather good mercenary.



The cockpit of the MAGLEV train, which goes around Ringworld's interior. You have to work out the alien controls for yourself.

RETURN TO RINGWORLD^CD

TIME-WARNER/TSUNAMI

(0604) 602800

£44.99 OUT NOW

MINIMUM SPEC

25MHz 486, VGA, 2Mb of hard disk space, CD-ROM drive and mouse.

ALSO SUPPORTS

Sound Blaster, SoundMaster 2, Pro Audio Spectrum and Roland soundcards.

THE GOOD...

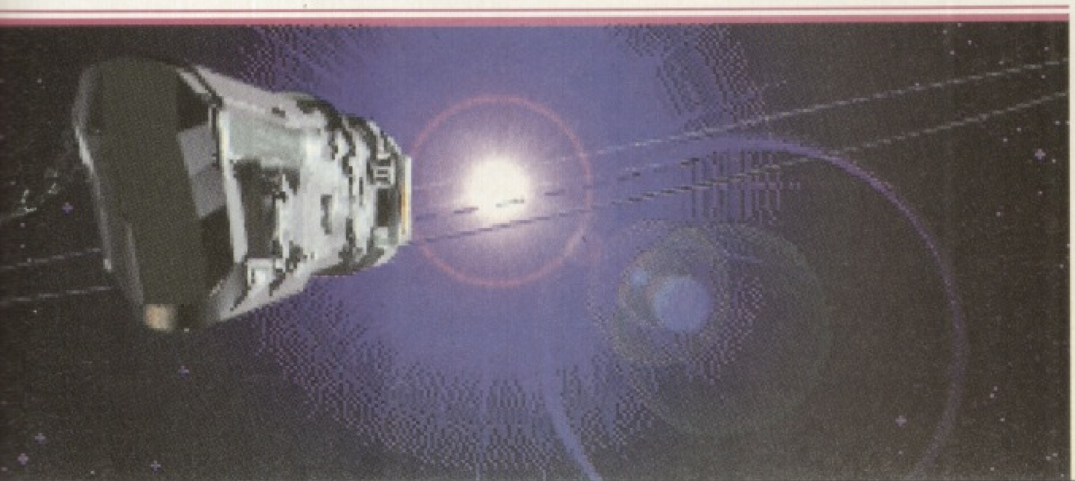
- Good plot and spacious play area with lots of variety.
- The interface is very easy to use.
- Good use of multiple characters.
- Nifty ray-traced anims.

...AND THE BAD

- Nothing *really* bad... but, then, nothing *really* good either.

Overall

78%



Total Carnage

David Upchurch slays 'em in ICE's ultra-violent coin-op conversion.

You may think that Doom is the peak of gaming goriness, but it's The Sooty Show compared to Total Carnage. ICE's conversion of the moderately successful Bally Midway coin-op has more blood, guts and severed limbs flying about than an explosion in a abattoir. One thing's for sure: your mother wouldn't like it — and I suspect that your dad wouldn't be too keen on it either.

But gory doesn't necessarily equal good. Wipe away the bright red spatters of blood and what you're left with is a fairly playable but remarkably primitive shoot-'em-up which, in terms of gameplay, is barely more advanced than the early 80s' CapCom hit Commando.

Total Carnage's plot (for what it's worth) is this: General Akhboob, a stereotypically insane megalomaniac, has taken control of the tiny country of Kookistan using his army of nuclear-generated mutant humanoids, and now poses a serious threat to world peace.

Only two men are brave enough, strong enough and simple-minded enough to enter the warzone, defeat the madman's mutant army and single-handedly save the day — Captain Carnage and Major Mayhem, AKA The Doomsday Squad.

The stage is thus set for a one- or two-player multi-way scrolling all-action romp, as the two bone-headed heroes blast their way through level after level of the General's fiendish forces and on to a final confrontation with the insane Akhboob himself.

Along the way, bonuses — extra lives, gems, money — and power-ups — weapon upgrades, smart bombs, shields — appear at random, just begging to be collected. In addition there are special gold keys to find (some of which open up secret rooms and pathways) and hostages to rescue.

As you can tell, Total Carnage is hardly bursting with originality but, to be fair, it does boast one or two new ideas. For one thing, it has multiple endings. For instance, you can actually finish the game without defeating General Akhboob. Also, those aforementioned gold keys are quite important — if you collect over 190, at the end of the game you'll be permitted entrance to the Pleasure Domes, home of true heroes. Because there's a different end sequence for each eventuality, repeated play is obviously encouraged.

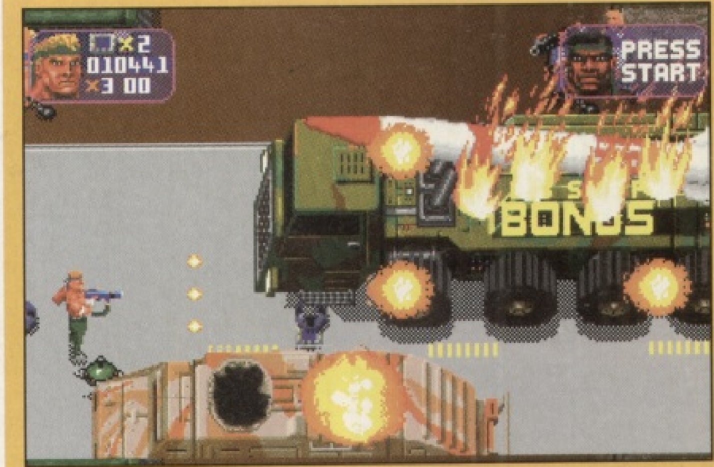
Total Carnage isn't totally linear either. Although you're forced to move along a vertical or horizontally scrolling pathway, occasionally you're given the chance to choose between one of two routes through the terrain ahead. There are also special warps, which let experienced players skip to the later levels — although that also means you may not be able to collect enough keys to 'properly' finish the game.

However, despite all this, Total Carnage has one major failing: it's impossibly difficult — and I use the word 'impossibly' in its most literal sense. There are simply too many bad guys running about and too much flak flying through the air, not to mention landmines scattered everywhere.

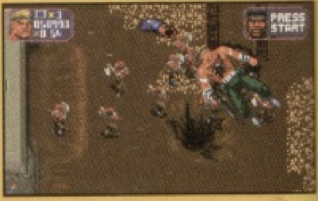
It took me about a week to get past even the first level and although, at first, Total Carnage's rock-hard nature increased my resolve to do better next time, after a while I got so frustrated I just felt like giving up. So I did.

The going isn't made any easier by the slightly dodgy controls. Normally you shoot in the direction you're moving in, but by holding down fire you can 'lock' your fire in one direction. Basically this means that in theory you can shoot at baddies while running away from them (a pretty essential skill when the screens get as crowded as Total Carnage's do), but actually pulling off such a manoeuvre for real takes quite a bit of practice.

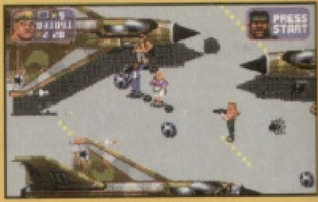
If you're an arcade die-hard looking for the ultimate shoot-'em-up challenge then you might want to give Total Carnage a try. The rest of us mere mortals will stick to something a little less frustratingly difficult — like learning Japanese.



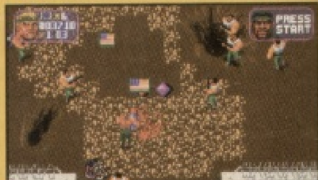
In the later levels there's some really neat stuff to blow up — though whether you've got the elite gaming skills required to reach them is unlikely.



Mind those mines, mate! Oh well, don't say I didn't warn you...



Rescue the camera crews and TV reporters lost behind enemy lines to earn points.



Every so often the scroll 'locks' and you're attacked by dozens of baddies.

TOTAL CARNAGE

ICE/HAND MADE SOFTWARE

(0453) 756993

£39.99 OUT NOW

MINIMUM SPEC

33MHz 386, VGA, 2Mb RAM and 10Mb of hard disk space.

ALSO SUPPORTS

Joystick; Sound Blaster soundcard.

THE GOOD...

- Stacks of non-stop, no-nonsense, no-brain action.
- As faithful a coin-op copy as you could hope for.
- Quite addictive in a masochistic "I'm going to finish this level if it kills me" kind of way.

...AND THE BAD

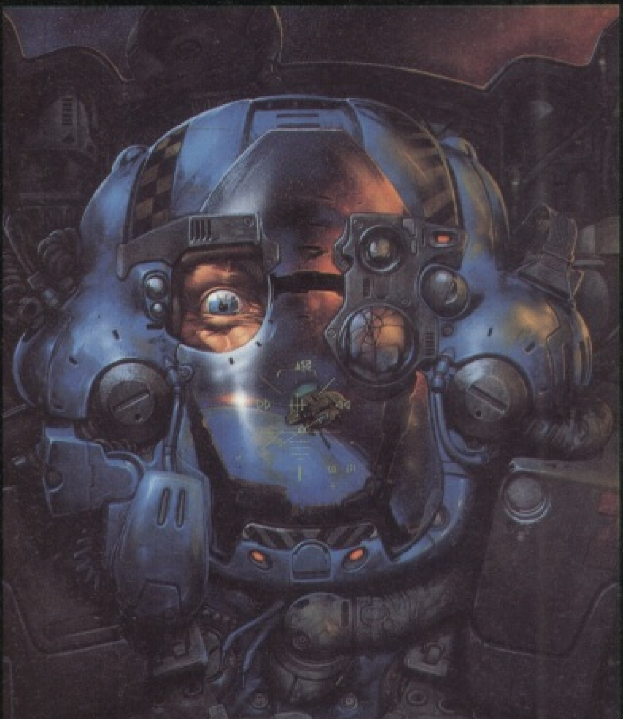
- *Ridiculously* tough in the game's early stages becomng *impossibly* tough later on.
- Controls take a bit of getting used to.

Overall

77%

AN EYE FOR AN EYE

RETRIBUTION



Grid Display
Mission Area
Enemy
S.F. Vehicles
Exit Scanner

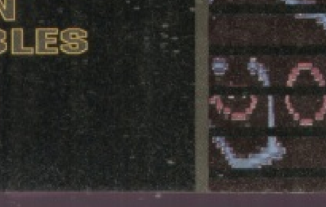
STATE OF THE ART GAMING TECHNOLOGY FOR YOUR PC & PC CD-ROM

You lower yourself into your cockpit knowing that the annihilation of Krellan life is little reward for the millions of your race who have been "harvested". You have hatred in your heart and become driven by one compulsion ....

retribution /ˌretri'bju:ʃ(ə)n/ *n.* requital usu. for evil done; vengeance.

SCIENTIST LOCATED. PREPARING TO BEAM HIM UP.

- Over 100 MB of animation and digitised speech.
- Logi-scape real time landscape generating technology incorporating new "Deep horizon" format.
- 11 major campaigns each with 4 highly strategic missions.
- 6 training missions to enhance performance.
- Superior artificial intelligence of the Krellan enemy.
- Exclusively commissioned musical score.
- Stunning range of in game SFX.
- Box artwork by Kevin Walker 2000 AD/JUDGE DREDD.



THEY'VE HAD
THEIR
POUND OF FLESH

Gremlin
INTERACTIVE

IT'S TIME TO
TURN
THE TABLES

© 1994 Gremlin Interactive Limited, Carver House, 2-4 Carver Street, Sheffield S1 4FS, England.

Lords Of The Realm

David Upchurch feels the need for siege in Impressions' latest strategy game.

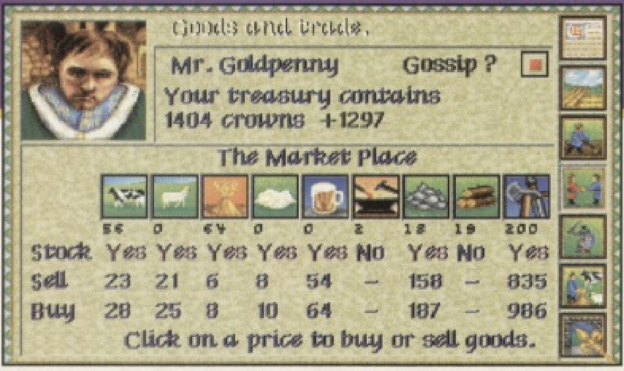
Lords Of The Realm is one of those highly-detailed, slow-paced strategy games that seems to take forever to get going. If you're a pure action fan with an attention span limited to the time it takes to blow the next bad guy off your screen, forget it. But if you're looking to get your head round a long-term heavy duty challenge, they don't come much tougher than this.

Lords Of The Realm is an excellent strategy game, the most ambitious and easily the best that Impressions have yet produced. The setting is medieval England, and the theme is the struggle for the throne. You start off as lord of only one county, so conquering the whole country is going to be a long, hard slog.

To complicate matters you've got five rivals, a cast of characters with titles like 'The Knight' and 'The Bishop' who sound like they've just stepped out of Monty Python. There's nothing funny about the way they behave, though — they're a ruthless, devious bunch who'll be sending you flattering messages and offers of alliance one moment, and ganging up to wipe you out the next. But, life was like that in those days.

The maps are pretty basic top-down affairs, one at the strategic level showing the whole country, the other on a larger scale dealing with the counties. The graphics don't amount to much, and the music even less, but, let's face it, this is a strategy game, so what do you expect? Good gameplay is the answer, and in the department that matters Lords Of The Realm is a clear winner.

Each county has a population of peasants. These are your workers, vital for food production, though you can also use them to quarry stone, mine metal, chop wood or manufacture weapons. You can also conscript them to make armies, but sign up too many in one go and you'll cause a serious drop in morale. You've got to keep the population happy, you see, because if the peasants are revolting it's no joke.



Goods and trade.

Mr. Goldpenny Gossip ? ☐

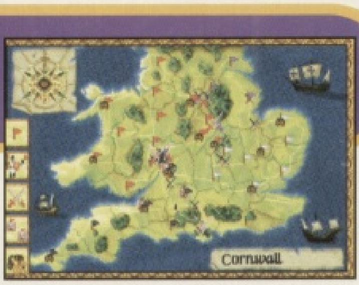
Your treasury contains
1404 crowns +1297

The Market Place

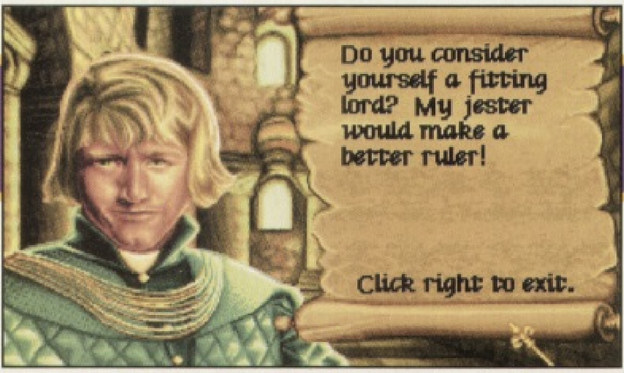
	56	0	64	0	0	2	18	19	200
Stock	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Sell	23	21	6	8	54	–	158	–	835
Buy	28	25	8	10	64	–	187	–	986

Click on a price to buy or sell goods.

You buy and sell from the merchants, but their visits are infrequent so you have to plan in advance. Prices fluctuate, especially for food, so try not to get yourself into a position where you're desperate and have to buy regardless of cost.



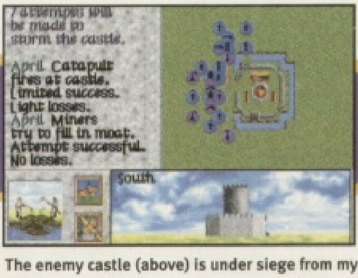
The strategic map in Lords of the Realm shows the broader picture. Here ,red (The Knight) seems to be doing rather too well for my liking. Notice that the crossed swords (representing battles) are concentrated towards the centre of the map. There's a real advantage in starting out in Cornwall or Northumberland, but unfortunately you don't have any choice as to where you begin the game.



Do you consider yourself a fitting lord? My jester would make a better ruler!

Click right to exit.

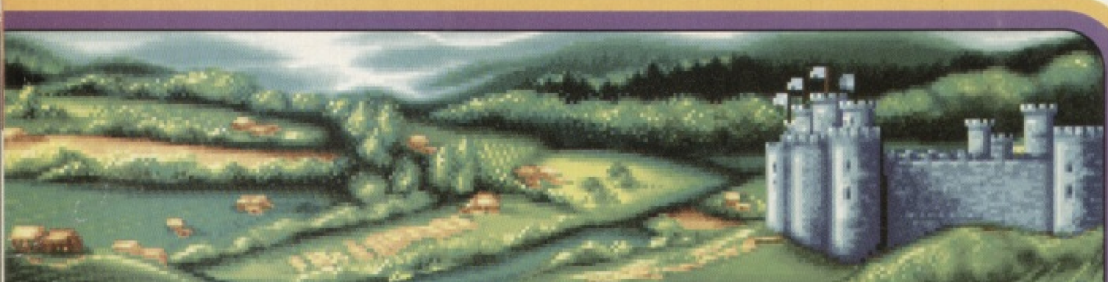
There's a degree of player interaction, and from time to time you'll receive messages from your rivals. This is my old friend the Knight, who's a bit lacking in the manners department. It's probably not worth my while offering *him* an alliance...



7 attempts will
be made to
storm the castle.

April Catapult
fires at castle.
Limited success.
Light losses.
April Miners
try to fill in moat.
Attempt successful.
No losses.

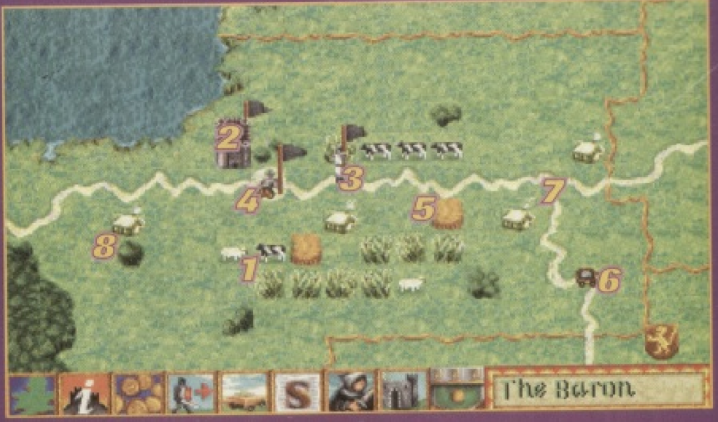
The enemy castle (above) is under siege from my crack medieval troops, who are currently digging in around the moat and attacking the walls with huge siege towers, ladders and battering rams. Under this onslaught, even the strongest defenses will crumble eventually, though the attacker (and that's me) may lose a lot of men in the process.



On this screen you decide how to use your fields and apportion workers. Cattle can sustain a small population. Grain feeds the most but is labour-intensive. Sheep are a cash-crop, useful for their wool as well as meat.

The county of **Somerset**

1. Your Number One enemy is starvation, so you must produce as much food as possible. In Dorset there are cows, sheep, grain and fallow fields.
2. Without a castle a county can be easily overrun. Even a small one will take a lot of materials to build, as well as a lot of labour and time.
3. You can send your armies to garrison castles or to attack other counties. They're a drain on your food supply, it's best to sponge off somebody else if you can.
4. The county cross lies at the heart of each region and the flag shows the colour of the owner. It can't be captured if there's a castle nearby.
5. If one county has a surplus you can transfer food to help it out. Particularly useful when you've just made a conquest, and stores in the new county are low.



6. If there's a wagon in your county it means there's a merchant present. They travel all over the country, and some counties get visited more often than others.
7. Movement is much quicker by road than cross-country, and your armies should stick to them where possible.
8. These small huts are where your people live. When your county forces are large enough you can send your soldiers to attack peasants in enemy-held counties, or to raid and pillage strategic enemy fields. That'll teach them to breed cows.

It's a bit like...

...Castles 2. Actually it's a lot like Castles 2, not just in terms of content but also style (castle-building menus, sliding bars on the resource screen, etc). It's also quite a lot like the old warhorse Defender Of The Crown, another game of medieval conquest. But out of all of them, Lords Of The Realm is the pick of the bunch.

Build Castle complete
Knights
Attack
Merchant complete
Scout
CASTLES II
SIEGE & CONQUEST

The quickest way to spread a little unhappiness is to let everyone starve. It may not be the most glamorous aspect of the game (alright, it isn't), but you're going to have to pay at least as much attention to the agricultural as to the military side of the game — you'll find that Archers are just as important as archers, if you see what I mean.

Each of your counties has 16 fields, and from turn to turn you'll have to adjust your labour force to deal with the vagaries of the season. In summer, for instance, you won't have enough jobs to go round, but come the autumn you'll need every spare hand to get the harvest in. The food business is actually the key to cracking the game, but if you get bored by the details you can hire a Steward to take care of them for you. It will cost you though.

And so will everything else. If you haven't got enough supplies you can buy them from one of the merchants who travel the land flogging their wares. They'll also pay for any of your excess produce. Besides food, useful items are wood and stone, which you'll need in large quantities to build castles, and, of course, weapons — everything from spears and crossbows to swords and armour. It's all very well, you see, nurturing a thriving agricultural community of happy peasants, but it's not a lot of use unless you can defend it.

Not only that, you've also got to get out there and conquer everyone else's counties. More subjects means more taxes raised per turn which means more military spending. Recruiting am army of peasants isn't much good, because they're only armed with pitchforks. To get a result you'll either need to kit them out with some decent equipment or else hire mercenaries. Neither option is cheap, and quite a few turns will pass before you're in a position to make your first aggressive move.

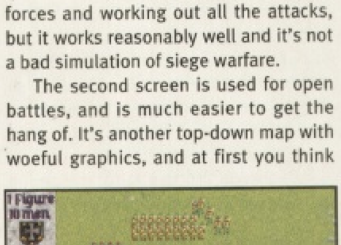
When at last you can afford to raise an army you can move in to attack an adjacent county, where you're taken to one of two battle screens. The first is used for resolving sieges, and only comes up if there's a castle in the area. You can try either to starve the defenders into submission (which can take ages) or else assault them, which is much more fun.

You won't get far, though, if you simply hurl your men against stone walls, so first you must build some siege engines — catapults and trebuchets to make a breach, battering rams and simple ladders for the storming parties. It's quite a fiddly business positioning your forces and working out all the attacks, but it works reasonably well and it's not a bad simulation of siege warfare.

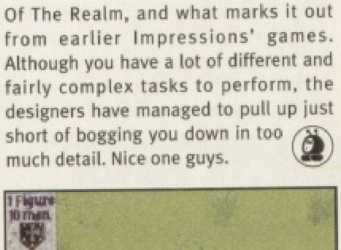
The second screen is used for open battles, and is much easier to get the hang of. It's another top-down map with woeful graphics, and at first you think it's going to be like Impressions' Micro-Miniatures game, which ought to have been put out to grass yonks ago. Thankfully, though, it turns out to be a much simpler and less awkward system, for which relief much thanks.

Neither type of battle is going to win any prizes for originality or excitement, but they're pitched at just the right level. If they were any more complex you'd be in danger of losing sight of the larger strategic picture.

This is the big achievement of Lords Of The Realm, and what marks it out from earlier Impressions' games. Although you have a lot of different and fairly complex tasks to perform, the designers have managed to pull up just short of bogging you down in too much detail. Nice one guys.



The tactical battle screen. My line of archers stands firm, while the massed ranks of the enemy close in for hand-to-hand combat. It all looks very neat and orderly at the moment, but it won't last...



...And it hasn't: this is the same battle a few minutes later. As you can see, it looks like a rugby maul. Medieval battles weren't exactly renowned for their subtlety. Run around, chop off a limb, stab a peasant, etc, etc.

LORDS OF THE REALM

IMPRESSIONS/IN-HOUSE

(0171) 351 2133

£39.99 OUT NOW

MINIMUM SPEC

20MHz 386, VGA, 14Mb of hard disk space and mouse.

ALSO SUPPORTS

Sound Blaster, Ad Lib, Roland and Aria soundcards.

THE GOOD...

- A tough long-term challenge with many levels of difficulty.
- A supremely user-friendly interface.
- Excellent multi-player options.

...AND THE BAD

- Slow to get going.
- Poor graphics.
- Authentic (i.e. irritating) medieval-style music.

Overall

84%

review

David Upchurch battles for supremacy in the Ascalon Rift in GameTek's would-be TIE Fighter beater.

Star Crusader CD

I've always wondered what it would be like to be psychic. And now, dear reader, I firmly believe that — yes! — I have been so blessed with the awakening of The Power that lies dormant within us all! It seems my Power manifests itself in an ability to see into the lives of others, simply by touching something to which they have a personal connection.

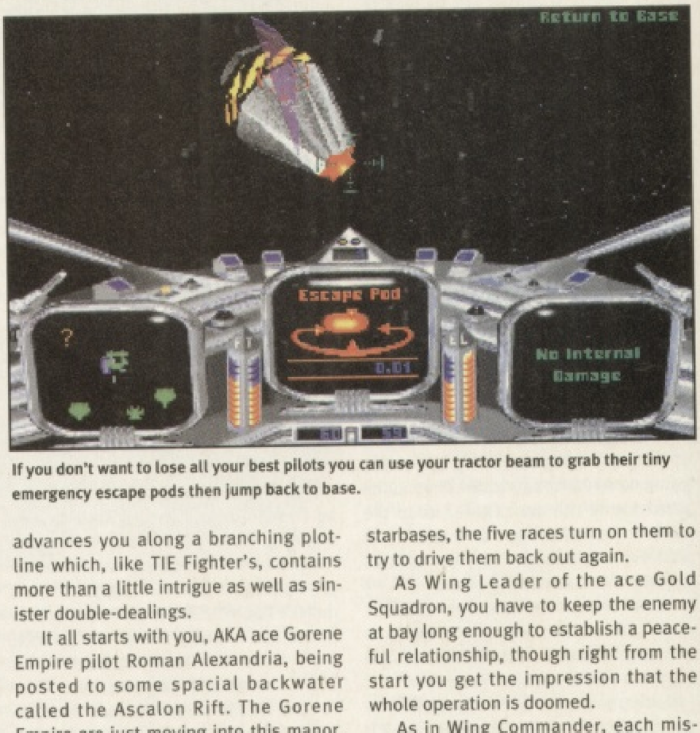
Funnily enough, I first became aware of this awesome ability moments after picking up the Star Crusader CD, drawing it out of its sleeve and placing it into the drive. The game began and, all of a sudden, I was struck with an inexplicable but never-the-less assured awareness. For some reason I was *certain* that the programmers and designers of Star Crusader had, at some point in the past, played Wing Commander, X-Wing and TIE Fighter.

In fact, this mysterious feeling was immediately followed by what appeared to be another manifestation of a psychic phenomenon, one which the scholars of the paranormal call 'Deja Vu'. As I started enjoying the space combat action it was as if I'd played a game very similar to this one... only months ago. But how is that possible?

There is another explanation for these bizarre events, and though the sceptics who hound gifted individuals such as myself may find it better suits their blinkered, cynical view of the universe, I myself find it less plausible. They might well say that the programmers of Star Crusader have played the aforementioned space combat simulations, noted the best bits, then put them in their own game.

Surely this can't be true — or can it? And if it is true, does it really matter? Can you really complain if their game is an undeniably good one anyway? Because, if truth be told, Star Crusader IS pretty good, actually.

I must admit, though, those fundamental gameplay similarities are striking. Star Crusader is a space combat sim, with fancy 3D graphics and 104 varied missions full of pilot's-eye-view laser dogfighting against lifeforms whose personal philosophies run contrary to your own. Each mission advances you along a branching plotline which, like TIE Fighter's, contains more than a little intrigue as well as sinister double-dealings.



If you don't want to lose all your best pilots you can use your tractor beam to grab their tiny emergency escape pods then jump back to base.

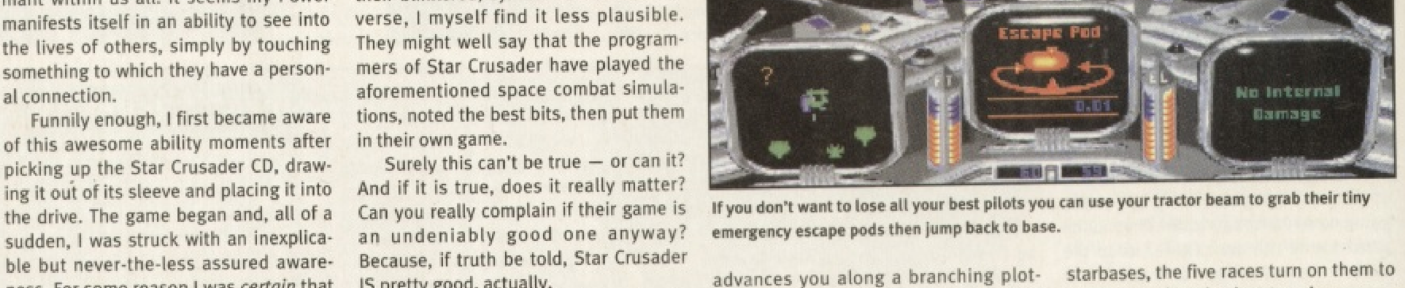
It all starts with you, AKA ace Gorene Empire pilot Roman Alexandria, being posted to some spacial backwater called the Ascalon Rift. The Gorene Empire are just moving into this manor, and have offered to bring peace and enlightenment to the five races who are already at war for control of the region. Perhaps it's not surprising, then, that when the Gorenes arrive and set up starbases, the five races turn on them to try to drive them back out again.

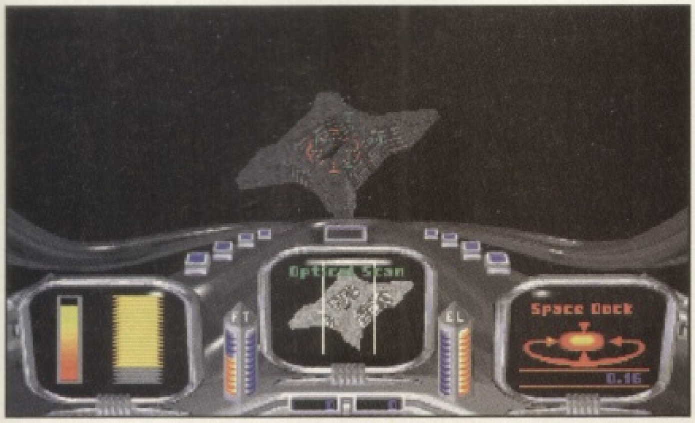
As Wing Leader of the ace Gold Squadron, you have to keep the enemy at bay long enough to establish a peaceful relationship, though right from the start you get the impression that the whole operation is doomed.

As in Wing Commander, each mission is preceded by a briefing room session, and it's during these that you get the impression that something smelly is afoot. After the mission description the pilots all start questioning the flight

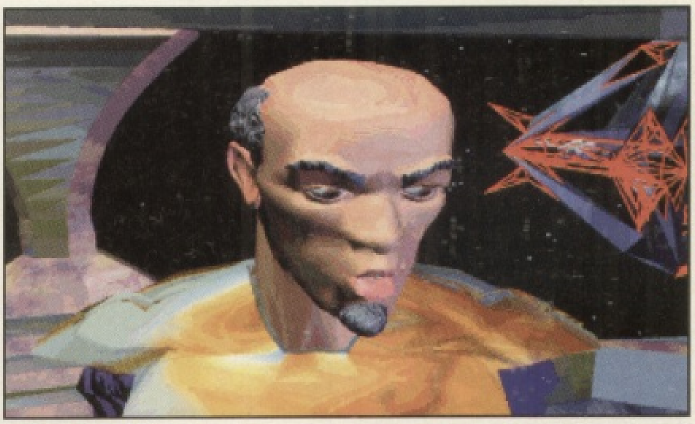
Eat Vacuum, Spaceboy!

One hit too many and your ship shatters, so you get a cutscene in which your head explodes as the cockpit depressurises. Actually, it cuts away before the glop hits the camera...





The recon missions are the hardest, forcing you to fly to within 200 metres of the target then stay in range while the scanner or remote probe gets an eyeful.



Star Crusader comes replete with a lengthy and impressive ray-traced intro. Unfortunately the people look like the Aquaphibians in Stingray and their mouths over-enunciate madly.

commander's orders, some of them objecting to being sent on suicide missions or seemingly unnecessary attacks which seem to run counter to the Empire's policies of peace. This being a CD game, the debating is all spoken, and for once the actors sound like they mean it, so the plot is full of tension.

But there's no time for debate when your starfighter warps into the mission zone, though. Arm the weapons, tap the 'E' key to target the nearest enemy, then drop in behind him, match his speed (yup, there IS a 'match speed' control) and start shooting. The combat feels pretty good, the enemy ships manoevring fairly realistically to avoid your shots rather than just trying those crappy chicken-run tactics you get in Frontier and Wing Commander Armada.

Again, it won't take long for anyone who's played TIE Fighter or X-Wing to get into the swing of things. You can even pass orders to your wingmen, though this seems to have less prominence than in the LucasArts games.

The programmers have used every graphics trick in the book to try to make things look realistic. The spacecraft are decked out with texture-mapping, light-source shading and Gouraud shading — you can even toggle the Gouraud with seldom-seen Phong shading. Even the starfield has planets, galaxies and nebulae mapped onto it.

I must say, though, that all these fripperies don't make the ships look *that* good. In fact, they look angular and garish, and in many ways I thought the comparatively bland but streamlined ships in TIE Fighter were more pleasing, probably because, well, they were Star Wars ships, weren't they?

The cockpit displays are very similar to the ones in the Star Wars games — targeting grid, ship identifier, engine, laser- and shield-power levels — but there are a few little extras which add something to the action. The three monitors can be set to show more than ten different displays, such as your internal systems damage, the targeted enemy's damage, your shield strength, his shield strength, a 'rear-view mirror', a target tracking camera and a radar display.

The only trouble is switching between them in the midst of battle requires some super-deft key combos. In fact, learning all of the keyboard controls is quite a daunting prospect as there are no less than 103 (!) different key combinations, involving ALTs, CTRLs, SHIFTs and two-key sequences — it's almost like operating the original version of WordStar!

Mind you, most of the more outlandish controls operate some of the quite smart unique features, such as the tractor beam (save your fallen comrades by capturing their escape pods!), the scanners and probe launcher which are required for the recon missions, the communications screen, the stealth generator (and the stealth generator battery charger!) and the shield and laser overloads (emergency use only).

Switching on overloads or taking some risk activates another unique feature — the ship's computer speaks, enunciating clearly in that sort of matter-of-fact female voice you hear in TV shows and movies. This is really cool, and these verbal warnings adds a lot to the ambience. The ether is also buzzing with chatter from your enemies and your wing men, who turn out to be an insufferably cocky bunch with little conversation apart from gung-ho-isms. Still, as an extra it works well.

So, all in all, even if you were to accuse Star Crusader of being a bit previous, developers Take 2 deserve a lot of credit for coming up with a TIE Fighter-style game which compares so well to TIE Fighter, and for throwing in a few good ideas of their own.

But having said that, playing Star Crusader made me realise how much the Star Wars feel adds to the enjoyment of TIE Fighter. Buzzing around X-Wings and Star Destroyers was just as I imagined it would be, but zipping around in these brightly-coloured ships, though fun, just doesn't have quite the same thrill.

STAR CRUSADER

GameTek/Take 2

(0753) 553445

£39.99 Out Now

MINIMUM **SPEC**

33MHz 486, VGA, 4Mb RAM and double-speed CD-ROM drive.

ALSO **SUPPORTS**

Mouse; joystick; Sound Blaster, Ad Lib, Pro Audio Spectrum, Wave Blaster, SoundMaster 2 and Roland soundcards.

THE GOOD...

- The mix of missions is excellent.
- The flying and combat both feel pretty good.
- All the CD extras, like the speech and the animations, are appreciated.

...AND THE BAD

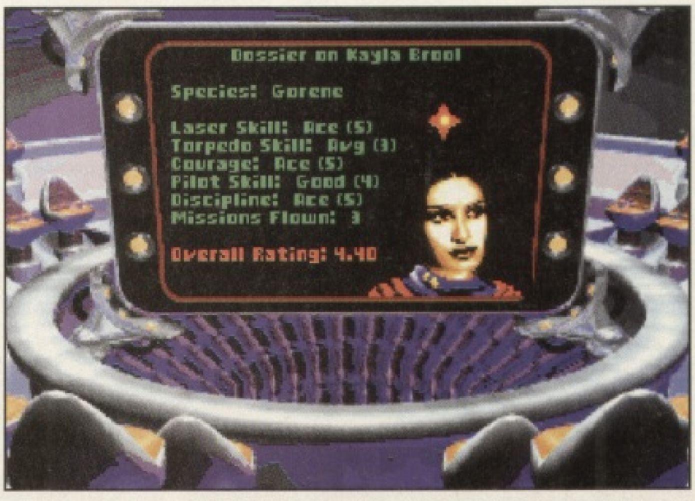
- Sometimes the graphics look ugly.
- The atmosphere isn't quite as good as TIE Fighter's, but only because this isn't a Star Wars game.
- Controlling the wingmen in battle isn't as easy as in TIE Fighter.
- The pre-mission strategy bit is a bit too complex to be bothered with.
- A lot of complicated key commands.

Overall

80%

It's a bit like...

...Wing Commander, X-Wing, TIE Fighter — take your pick! Star Crusader contains elements of all these games. However, despite a few extra bells and whistles, such as the impressive ray-traced animations and the full speech pulled off CD, it's not really superior to any of them. However, the 3D engine has potential, and it'll be interesting to see what Take 2 do with it next...



Dossier on Kayla Brool

Species: Gorene

Laser Skill: Ace (5)
Torpedo Skill: Avg (3)
Courage: Ace (5)
Pilot Skill: Good (4)
Discipline: Ace (5)
Missions Flown: 3

Overall Rating: 4.40

When you get full command of the squadron you can assign specific ships and pilots to a mission, and give each pilot specific targets. This section can get a bit complicated, but usually you don't have to bother with it too much.

review

On The Ball League Edition

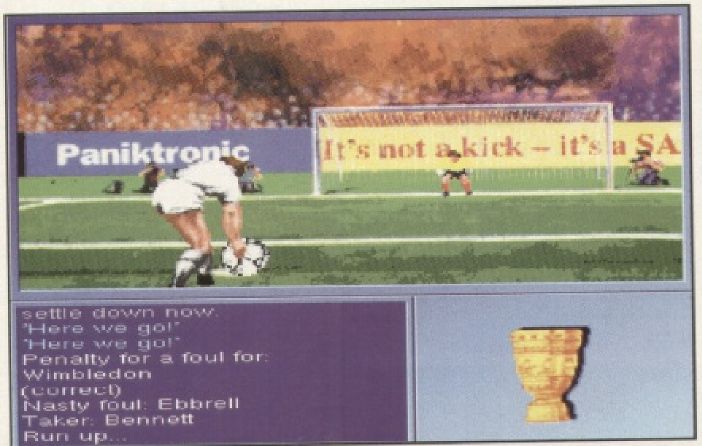
Dean Evans plays five up-front in the league version of Ascon's football manager sim.

At first glance, the new League Edition of Ascon's On The Ball looks exactly the same as the World Cup version. It's got the attractive stills, the animated watercolour-style match highlights and, so it seems, all the match, management and training features of the first game. In fact, the words 'cash' and 'in' immediately spring to mind.

But the new League Edition is a bit more than just the old game engine with a couple of extra tweaks stuck on to it. Although the two games are undoubtedly very similar, the League Edition challenges you to guide your team to the top of the Premier League, juggling your club finances, signing new players, developing the ground and so on.

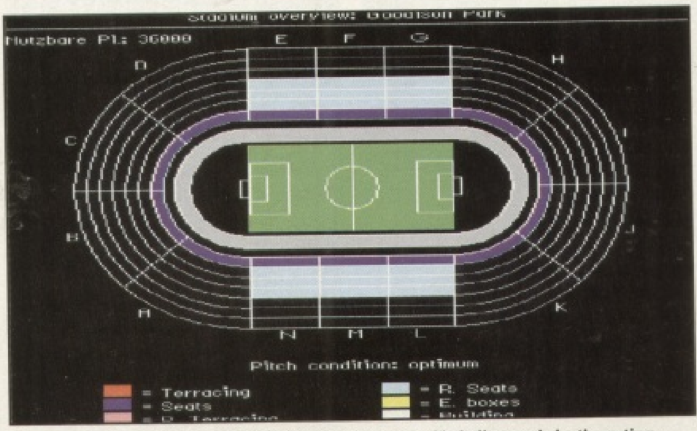
Like the World Cup Edition, the League version of On The Ball is controlled from a central office screen, and from here you can call up the game's sub-menus by clicking on various icons. For example, if you click on the wallsafe you can check on your club's finances, while clicking on the stadium allows you to implement ground improvements.

While in the World Cup Edition (reviewed in Issue 3) your task was to train a squad, whittle it down to 22 and then win the World Cup, the aim of the League version is to take the Premier League team of your choice (Blackburn, Liverpool, etc) to the dizzy heights of both Championship and European glory.



```
settle down now.
"Here we go!"
"Here we go!"
Penalty for a foul for:
Wimbledon
(correct)
Nasty foul: Ebbrell
Taker: Bennett
Run up...
```

The crowd falls silent as Bennett places the ball on the spot. Can old Southall save the match?



As you redevelop your stadium it's bye-bye terraces and a big hello to red plastic seating...

Team selection is a simple matter of picking the best and most able players in your squad and training them to the peak of skill and physical fitness. Each member of your current squad has an individual playing strength based on 'form' points which are gained and lost throughout the season. Before each match, these player combined form points are added together to make a team rating, which determines how well your side will play.

As a team's rating is bound to fluctuate during the year, you can try to increase the form of your players by holding training sessions to improve their passing, free kicks and tackling skills. However, when you train your squad you also run the risk that if a player picks up an injury, he'll be out for at least four weeks. So, if one of your star players becomes lazy and loses form points, can you really afford to push him hard in training?

In On The Ball you soon realise that the perils of Premier League management involve much more than just picking a team of 11 players who'll trot out onto the pitch every Saturday afternoon. As in other football management games, you can buy and sell players and even scout the oversees transfer market for some crowd-pulling continental flair.

Obviously, success on the pitch is massively important but for your club to rake in the money, you've also got to balance the budgets, convert the old terraces to seating, negotiate lucrative sponsorship deals, give TV interviews and, if you're any good, even press your claim to become national team manager. Yes, the ultimate aim of an On The Ball League manager is to become the new manager of England. And when you've done that you can always nip out and buy the World Cup Edition and try to win the World Cup...

All in all, the League version of On The Ball is every bit as engaging and playable as its World Cup counterpart. The graphics are identical and use the same animated watercolours to illustrate key match moments like penalties, free kicks, fouls and those dazzling Giggs-like solo runs from midfield.

But with five difficulty levels and a four player option, the League Edition of On The Ball does have much more depth to it than the World Cup variant. I think it's a shame that you can only choose a Premier League team — you can't battle your way up from the Vauxhaul Conference, I'm afraid — but on the other hand, OTB cuts out all the boring lower division football and dumps you right in at the deep end.

So do you buy it? Well, if you've already bought the World Cup Edition of On The Ball, it's unlikely you'll want to shell out for more of the same. But if you haven't got a football management game in your collection, then either wait for Gremlin's Premier Manager 3, or go for On The Ball. Whatever you buy, you won't be disappointed.

ON THE BALL: LEAGUE EDITION

ASCON/IN HOUSE

(0171) 372 7435

£34.99 OUT NOW

MINIMUM SPEC

25MHz 386, VGA, 4Mb RAM and 8Mb of hard disk space.

ALSO SUPPORTS

Mouse; Sound Blaster and Ad Lib soundcards.

THE GOOD...

- With nice graphics and a funky soundtrack, On The Ball is the best-looking footy management game around.
- An in-depth simulation of the Premier League.
- Excellent digitised sound effects add to the 'big match' atmosphere.
- All the options you could wish for including transfers, wage negotiations, ground improvements, etc.

...AND THE BAD

- It's a shame you can't pick a non-Premier League side.
- The animations are often a bit on the jerky side.

Overall

86%

Alex Fraser indulges in some wordplay in this Windows mini-game.

Elimination

At first sight, Elimination is a pretty poor excuse for a PC game. There are no guns, no cars, no magic spells, no dragons, no futuristic cities under alien threat. Whisper it softly, but... it's a word game.

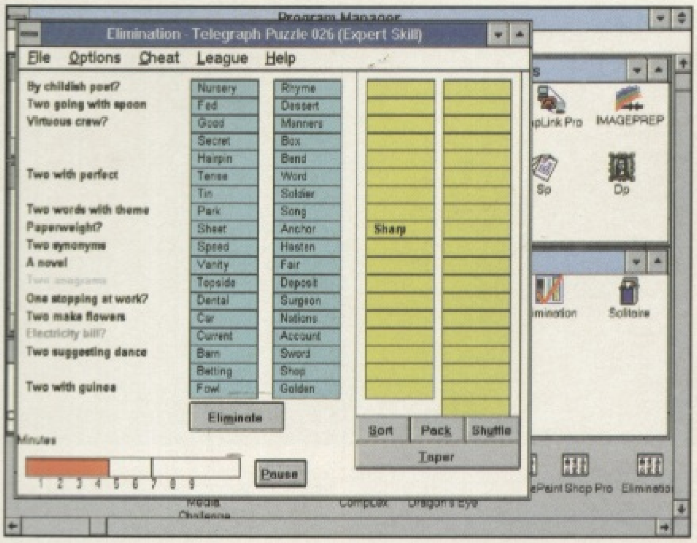
It's actually intended to be played much in the same way as the Microsoft Arcade games — in a coffee break, when the boss has their back turned, or when you just can't be bothered to crash the network with Doom or load up anything major.

Elimination is more like a crossword puzzle than anything else. In each game, you have a list of 37 words and a set of 18 clues. The answer to each clue comprises two words from the list of 37. You 'pick up' the correct words with the mouse, drag them over to the boxes next to the clue and carry on in this way until you've answered each clue and there's only one word left out of the whole 37.

If you've got the answers right and the correct word left on its own, you've won the game. It's as simple as that. There are 150 games in the Elimination program and you can enter your high scores and listen to a little tinny fanfare when you complete each individual frame successfully.

And that's it, really. Elimination originated in the Sunday Telegraph, of all places, where it is run in print with just the word and the clue list. The only difference the computer version offers is that there are three skill levels to get to grips with, and on medium and expert levels, random clues will start to fade out. If you're not quick enough with the answers, you may find there's no visible clue to solve.

In fact, Elimination is rather fun, in a peaceable, passive sort of way. But if you start playing it intensively, you soon discover that the clues are all very similar in style and some of the words crop up again and again in different frames. Which all this means is that your times end up getting faster and faster and you soon feel that you've got the better of the game engine rather quickly. So don't over do it.



By childish poet?
Two going with spoon
Virtuous crew?
Two with perfect
Two words with theme
Paperweight?
Two synonyms
A novel
Two anagrams
One stopping at work?
Two make flowers
Electricity bill?
Two suggesting dance
Two with guinea

Nursery, Fed, Good, Secret, Hairpin, Tense, Tin, Park, Sheet, Speed, Vanity, Topside, Dental, Car, Current, Barn, Betting, Fowl

Rhyme, Dessert, Manners, Box, Bend, Word, Soldier, Song, Anchor, Hasten, Fair, Deposit, Surgeon, Nations, Account, Sword, Shop, Golden

Sharp

ELIMINATION

LIBRE/IN-HOUSE

(0642) 783739

£25.99 OUT NOW

MINIMUM SPEC

25MHz 386, SVGA, 4Mb RAM, 1.1Mb of hard disk space, Windows 3.1 and a mouse.

ALSO SUPPORTS

Er... nothing much really.

THE GOOD...

- It's a neat way of passing a spare few minutes when you don't have time to get bogged down in anything major.
- Crossword fans will like it.

...AND THE BAD

- It's very plain — no bells, no whistles, and the graphics are rudimentary.
- Fast it ain't.

Overall

64%

Alex Fraser stiffens his upper lip and goes all military with Bluebyte's latest fantasy wargame

Battle Isle 2: Titan's Legacy CD

Titan's Legacy is a data disc for Bluebyte's Battle Isle 2, a huge, comprehensive, and *almost* serious fantasy wargame. But despite being a hex-based game (which essentially involves moving little tank and soldier symbols around a battlefield grid), Battle Isle has always managed to sidestep the heavyweight tedium of most wargames and remain accessible.

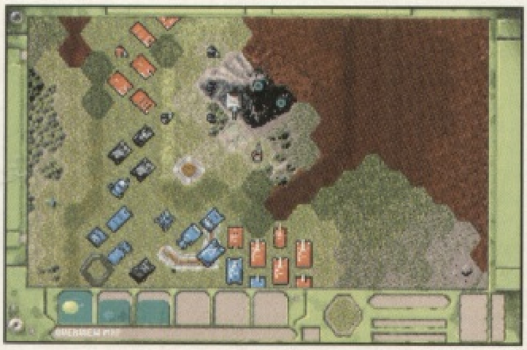
As you'd expect from a data disc, the bulk of Titan's Legacy (or Battle Isle two-and-a-half, if you prefer) consists of an additional 30-odd new missions to continue the series' soap-opera style storyline, a sprinkling of new military hardware, and an assortment of tweaks and improvements to the gameplay.

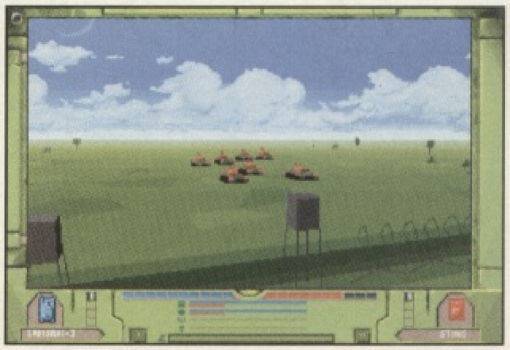
These tweaks include more variety in the campaigns — desertion, hidden equipment and supplies, plot and tactical changes mid-battle and so on — and some rule changes, all designed to stop the game degenerating into an armoured slugging match.

But Battle Isle 2 fans will be most interested in two other changes. Firstly, Titan's Legacy has managed to sort out the excruciating slowness of the computer artificial intelligence. The bigger maps are still far from quick to play, but the game is a lot better in this respect than it used to be.

Secondly, Titan's Legacy sees the return of the network facility that mysteriously went missing from the full game at the last moment. In fact, the bulk of the new manual is dedicated to network, modem and serial-link games, the dedicated multi-plyer maps, and how to hook up eight players over a network for a variety of game formats (changing alliance set-ups, tornament rules, etc).

With the networking,the improved speed and a wodge of extra missions, Titan's Legacy must be an essential buy to anyone with a copy of Battle Isle 2 sitting by their PC.





TITAN'S LEGACY

BLUEBYTE/IN-HOUSE

(0727) 868005

£24.99 OUT NOW

MINIMUM SPEC

25MHz 386, VGA, 4Mb RAM, double-speed CD-ROM drive and a mouse.

ALSO SUPPORTS

Sound Blaster, Ad Lib, General Midi and Roland soundcards.

THE GOOD...

- So big it hurts.
- Fun and accessible, even if you aren't the kind of person who can quote Warsaw Pact troop movements between 1970 and 1974...

...AND THE BAD

- So big it gets very slow.
- Some battles still turn into a big slugging match.

Overall

84%

Space Simulator

Without lasers and hyperdrives, Dean Evans thrusts his thrusters in Microsoft's tour of the stars.

Space, according to the great scribe Douglas Adams, is big. Really big. You just won't believe how hugely, vastly, mind-bogglingly big it is. I mean, you may think it's a long way down the road to the chemists but that's just peanuts to space. Listen...

If you've ever played the hyper-realistic Flight Simulator 5, you'll have a good idea of what to expect from Microsoft's shiny new space simulator. Swap the Cessna for the Space Shuttle and the San Francisco skyline for the rings of Saturn, and you've got Space Simulator, probably the closest you will ever get to experiencing the joys of modern space travel.

But I use the word 'joys' in its loosest sense here. Microsoft's Space Simulator is an extremely difficult game to describe because, in many respects, it's not really a game at all. It's more of a semi-interactive, guided tour of the galaxy — there are no bad guys to shoot, no cinematic cutscenes and not a hyperspatial corridor or even a cryogenic sleep tank in sight.

Not that the lack of modern science-fiction trappings is a problem. Far from it, in fact. In Space Simulator you can go wherever you please. You can pick a planet, fly to it (speeding up the time so it doesn't take you three weeks to do so), drop into orbit above it and even land on it if you want to. With a variety of futuristic starships at your disposal, the galaxy is yours to explore and to discover.

Unlike most space games, Space Simulator isn't mission-based — instead, it has various preset 'situations' that you can play individually. After loading up a specific scenario you can either (a) just sit back and watch the events unfold or (b) take the controls yourself and fly your ship/jetpack around, say, the giant solar panels of the space station Freedom or through the deep, chiselled canyons around Olympus Mons on the planet Mars.

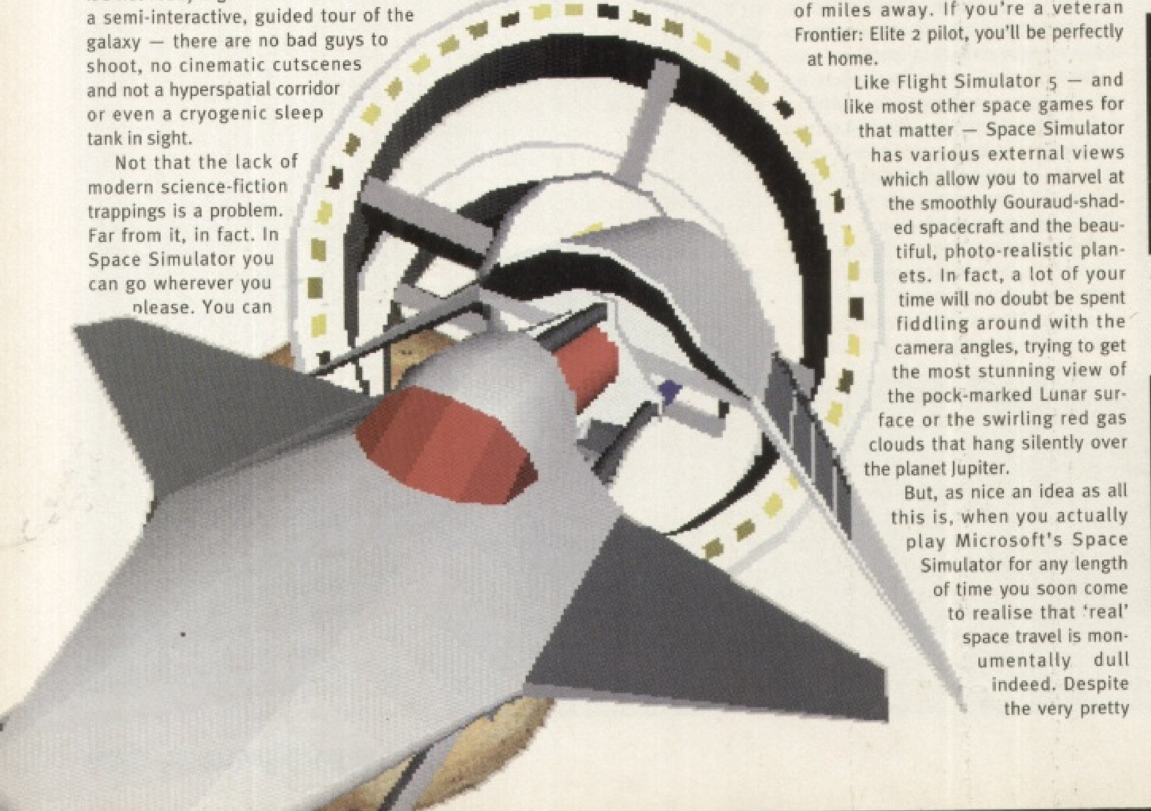
The situations themselves are a mix of both realistic and fictional scenarios, so you can be piloting the Apollo Lunar Module one minute and then zipping casually through the struts of a 2001-style space station the next. Space Simulator is nothing if not flexible, and while realism tends to dominate over heart-pounding excitement, the game is both educational and fairly interesting to mess around with.

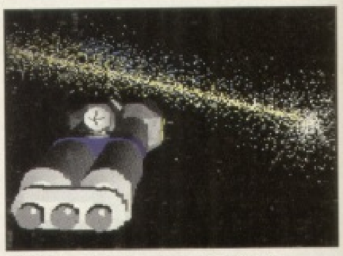
Space Simulator lets you fly a variety of different spaceships including the Space Shuttle, the Apollo Command Module and the Manned Manoeuvring Unit (MMV) jetpack. In addition, and assuming you can suspend disbelief for a moment, there's also the F-79 Galactic Fighter, the huge Zander Space Freighter and the oddly-shaped Bussard Ram-Jet to get to grips with.

Each of these craft is controlled realistically with simple four-way thruster controls and, as you'd expect with a 'simulator', your ship is subject to the very strict laws of astrophysics. Don't think you can screech to a stop in seconds, change direction and then accelerate away again like you can in TIE Fighter. If you're en route to the planet Mars, for example, you have to start slowing down when you're still millions of miles away. If you're a veteran Frontier: Elite 2 pilot, you'll be perfectly at home.

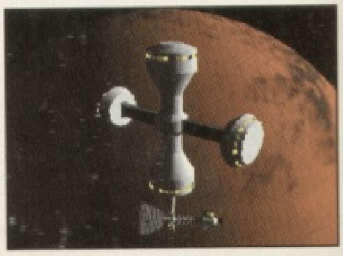
Like Flight Simulator 5 — and like most other space games for that matter — Space Simulator has various external views which allow you to marvel at the smoothly Gouraud-shaded spacecraft and the beautiful, photo-realistic planets. In fact, a lot of your time will no doubt be spent fiddling around with the camera angles, trying to get the most stunning view of the pock-marked Lunar surface or the swirling red gas clouds that hang silently over the planet Jupiter.

But, as nice an idea as all this is, when you actually play Microsoft's Space Simulator for any length of time you soon come to realise that 'real' space travel is monumentally dull indeed. Despite the very pretty

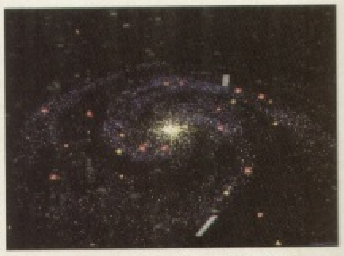




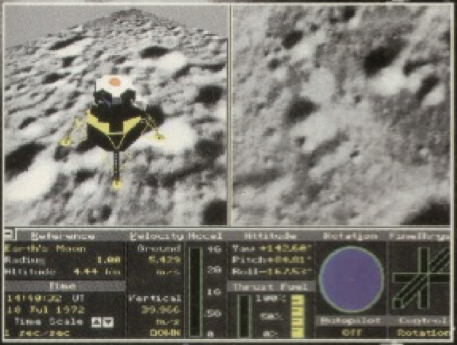
The Galactic Explorer bravely pursues Halley's Comet in one of the more realistic Space Simulator situations. Simply sit back and watch, or take the controls to control the historic fly-by...



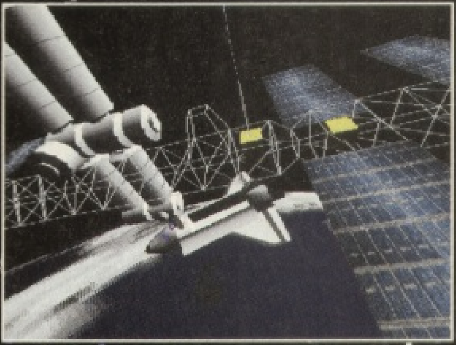
Above the dusty red Martian surface, the Bussard Ram-Jet docks slowly with the Mars space station. Check out the Gouraud shading and the photo-realistic planet.



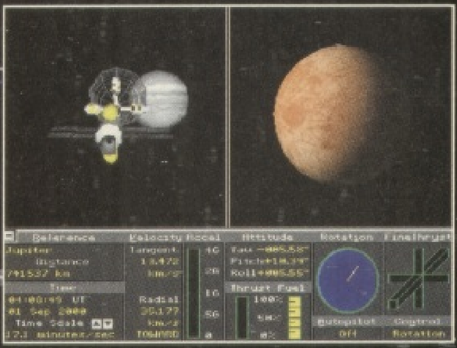
If you can see the beautiful spiral of the Milky Way galaxy through the thick plexiglass window of your Space Shuttle, you've made a major wrong turn.



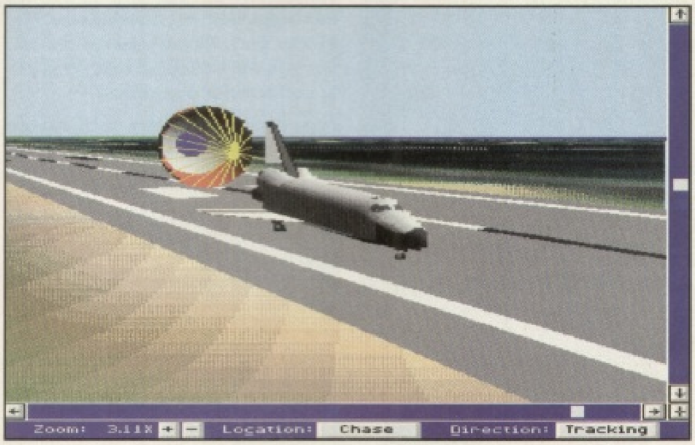
Space Simulator allows you to recreate the historic moon landings. Thanks to the split-screen view you can watch both the Lunar Module and the surface rushing up to meet it.



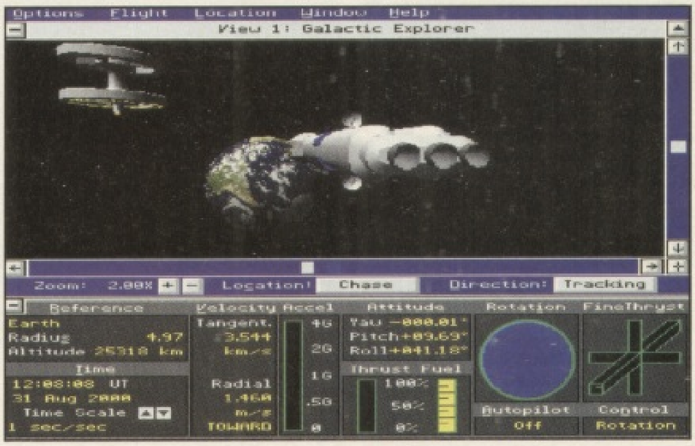
Give it a couple of years and this picture of the American Space Shuttle docked onto the proposed space station Freedom could become a reality.



In addition to simulating huge spacecraft like space freighters and explorer craft, you can also sit back and watch the Voyager probe zip past the outer planets.



Zoom: 3.11X
Location: Chase
Direction: Tracking



View 1: Galactic Explorer

Zoom: 2.00X
Location: Chase
Direction: Tracking

Reference
Earth
Radius 4.97
Altitude 25318 km
Time
12:08:08 UT
31 Aug 2000
Time Scale
1 sec/sec

Velocity Accel
Tangent.
3.544
km/s
Radial
1.460
m/s
TOWARD
4G
2G
1G
.5G
0

Attitude
Yaw −000.01°
Pitch+03.69°
Roll+041.18°
Thrust Fuel
100%
50%
0%

Rotation
Autopilot
Off

FineThrust
Control
Rotation

(Above) The Space Shuttle Discovery touches down safely, deploying its huge parachute to slow it down. I'm amazed it's still in one piece because I'm the one who's just landed it. Third time lucky, I guess.

(Above right) Despite the fact that there are 2001-style space stations and huge fictional starcrusiers, Space Simulator doesn't have any teleports, alien races, robots or huge deep space battles. If William Shatner was here — boy! — would he be disappointed.

It's a bit like...

...Frontier: Elite 2. If you like a dollop of realism with your spaceflight, then Frontier has probably the most realistic flight model around. With over two thousand planets to explore, space stations to dock with, pirates to kill and military missions to complete, Frontier is a massively huge game. It's not as pretty as Space Simulator, but it's just as fiddly — a game for the patient amongst you.

Gouraud-shaded ships and the lovingly textured planets, swinging around in orbit above a distant planet just isn't very exciting.

And, without wishing to be too nasty, Space Simulator conveys (or should I say it 'simulates') this tedium very well. However, if you're prepared to sit down for a while and persevere and you've got a soft spot for star-gazing, then the Space Simulator can show you the wonders of the galaxy in all their glorious 256-colour, Gouraud-shaded, VGA splendour.

The whole point of Space Simulator is its realism and attention to detail. Flight Simulator 5 isn't very exciting but it's probably the most authentic flight sim you can buy. Space Simulator, to be fair, seems to simulate the mechanics of space quite well. You're not swamped with computer read-outs and thousands of switches, but I imagine that if I launched my shuttle from Cape Canaveral at the same time that NASA launched theirs, we'd both 'Go for throttle-up' and reach booster separation at precisely the same time.

But if you've ever played Frontier: Elite 2 you'll know that while realism is all well and good, it isn't that much fun in the longterm. Your average space game hasn't really got time for realism — it doesn't enhance the gameplay, it hinders it. Give me lasers, mass drivers, hyperspace drives and strange alien races in abundance. But real space flight? I'm not sure it makes a great game.

As a result, the learning curve for Space Simulator is quite a steep one, and if you're not put off by the complete lack of excitement and the rudimentary (and slightly fiddly) control system, then it's a game that you can tinker with for hours. It's a wonderful programming achievement certainly, and the graphics look great, but there's a big question mark as far as longevity is concerned. Personally, I don't think you'll be playing it after a couple of days because there's nothing in the game to keep you hooked into the night.

If the other space game on your hard disk is TIE Fighter, then I'm afraid to say that Space Simulator really isn't going to interest you at all. But if you want to unravel the secrets of the universe or you fancy journeying to the distant Pleiades, then Space Simulator will keep you mildly interested for a while. It's just never going to blow your socks off...

SPACE SIMULATOR

MICROSOFT/IN-HOUSE
(0181) 242 4100
£39.99 OUT NOW

MINIMUM SPEC

33MHz 386, VGA/SVGA, 2Mb RAM and 8Mb of hard disk space.

ALSO SUPPORTS

Mouse; OPL 2 and Ad Lib soundcards.

THE GOOD...

- Wonderfully detailed planets and star systems.
- A variety of different scenarios ranging from Moon landings to Martian surveys.
- Lots of different starships to fly about the solar system in.

...AND THE BAD

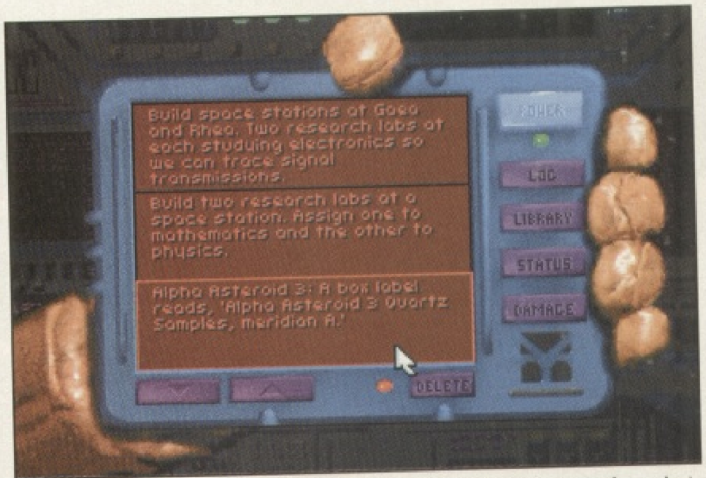
- Fiddly and quite difficult to get to grips with.
- It's quite boring.
- It's very boring, in fact.

Overall

69%

Alien Legacy

Alex Fraser catches the colonial spirit — and the first starship to distant Beta Caeli — in Sierra's space colony strategy game.



Build space stations at Gaea and Rhea. Two research labs at each studying electronics so we can trace signal transmissions.

Build two research labs at a space station. Assign one to mathematics and the other to physics.

Alpha Asteroid 3: A box label reads, 'Alpha Asteroid 3 Quartz Samples, meridian A.'

When you get a reports from crew and colonists your PDA (Personal Data Assistant) records the salient points, so you don't have to keep writing down planetary co-ordinates and 'Things To Do'. Very handy — every colony boss should have one.

Now here's something you don't see every day of the week. After garnering favourable reviews last month with Outpost, what do Sierra do but deliver Alien Legacy, yet another space-colonising game along suspiciously similar lines!

Is this some kind of all-out Sierra offensive to corner this seldom-exploited, but undoubtedly-lucrative sector of the game market? Are they out to catch, violently macerate then swallow the genre's small fry, like some ravenous Mako Shark with the point of an old broken-off harpoon lodged in the No-Mercy Cortex of its brain? Just what is on their minds, releasing two so similar games almost simultaneously?

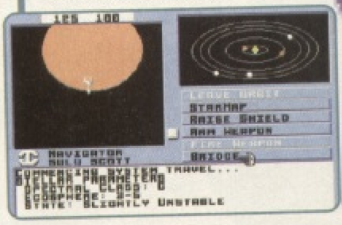
Okay, actually, Alien Legacy isn't *quite* identical to Outpost, though it does start off very similarly. As the action begins you and your crew awake from suspended animation onboard a huge 'seedship', the UNS Calypso. The Calypso left Earth in 2119, escaping an interstellar war between the human race and the genocidal Centaurians, its mission to set up colonies in the distant Beta Caeli system.

As you wake up, you come across an old message from Earth informing you that 16 years after the Calypso was launched, it was followed by a sister ship, the Tantalus, a more advanced vessel with more powerful engines that would get it to Beta Caeli 21 years ahead of the Calypso. But here you are in the Beta Caeli system, and there's no trace of the Tantalus...

So where did it go? What sinister force did the colonists fall victim to? And what happened to their more advanced technology? Anyway, never mind that because tracking down the fate of the Tantalus is of secondary importance to setting up colonies to house the Calypso's travel-weary passengers.

It's a bit like...

There are lots of games you could compare this to. But when I started playing it I was reminded of Starflight, a space-faring game of strategy and intrigue from the dim and distant past. And would you believe it, on the back of the Alien Legacy box it says? "Created by Joe Ybarra, designer of Starflight and Yserbius". Now there's a funny thing!



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COMMENCING SYSTEM TRAVEL...
STELLAR PARAMETERS
SPECTRAL CLASS: G
ECOSPHERE: 3-5
STATE: SLIGHTLY UNSTABLE
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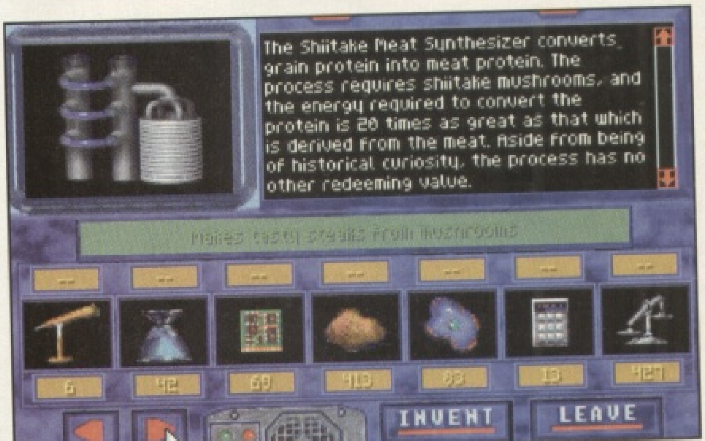
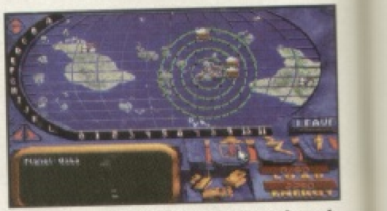


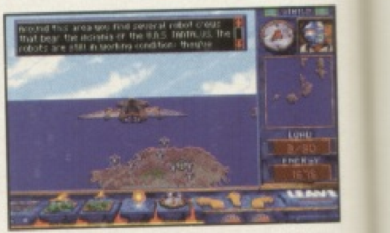
The Shiitake Meat Synthesizer converts grain protein into meat protein. The process requires shiitake mushrooms, and the energy required to convert the protein is 20 times as great as that which is derived from the meat. Aside from being of historical curiosity, the process has no other redeeming value.

Makes tasty steaks from mushrooms

Sometimes you can end up blowing valuable research resources on an idea that turns out to be useless. Ah well, you've got to experiment, haven't you?



I've just sent a ship out across the surface of Gaea to scan for ore. The green ripples show the range of the scan, which costs energy but has revealed three large deposits.



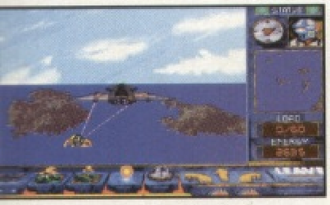
A strange signal leads me to this island on Gaea, where I find a load of old robots from the Tantalus. Put some new batteries in 'em and they can work for me.

So your first job is to start off a colony on the surface of Gaea, the Earth-type planet you find yourself orbiting at the start of the game. A colony is made up of three essential elements: the habitat modules where people live and procreate, and where food, water and air are recycled; factories which either mine essential fuel ore or build worker robots, spacecraft or weapons; and power stations which turn the fuel ore into energy needed to keep everything going.

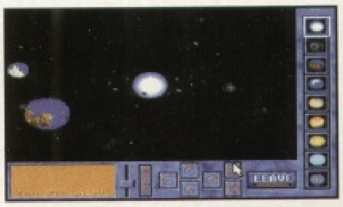
So what each colony ends up with is five resources, namely ore, energy units (generated by the power stations), life-support units (the food, air and so on created in the habitats), people and robots. To keep everything running you need to manage these resources so that you always have enough ore to feed the power station... so that there's enough power to keep the factories and habitats going... so that you have enough robots and people to work in the factories... and so on.

Each resource is essential to the creation of the others — if there aren't enough robots to work in the factories you won't be able to supply ore to the power stations. If supplies of anything run out, it isn't long before the whole colony grinds to a halt.

Fortunately you don't have to limit yourself to running one colony, and when the cupboards start getting bare you can ship in supplies from else-



As the monsters march on the Gaean colonies you have head them off with air attacks. This bit isn't as spectacular as it might look, but it helps vary the action.



Space... The Final Frontier... This is the map of the Beta Caeli system, which shows up all your colonies and orbiting ships as tiny specks. Awe inspiring, isn't it?

where. However, it's essential to nip these situations in the bud, so you have to keep zipping around between colonies, maintaining a constant check on their stockpiles.

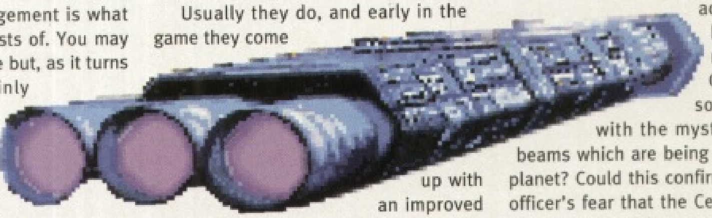
And not surprisingly, the more colonies you build the more touch-and-go things get as you stretch your attention ever-thinner. It's not hard to bite off more than you can chew, and I've already had to abandon two well-advanced games and start again, so that I could approach everything more methodically.

This resource management is what most of the game consists of. You may think it sounds mundane but, as it turns out, it's good fun, mainly because the game often sidetracks you away from running the colonies and gives you an interesting diversion.

The ever-deepening mystery of the Tantalus' disappearance, for example, adds what almost amounts to an adventure game element to the gameplay. The more you explore the system the more clues you come across, as scans detect abandoned buildings and probe ships discover advanced technology left behind by the Tantalus' missing colonists. One clue leads to another and, usually, also leads to some kind of technological advance.

During the course of the game, it's a good idea to set up research labs, as they add to your stockpiles of knowledge in astronomy, physics, biology and so on. Then, when one of these strange bits of lost equipment is found, it typically sparks off an idea among your scientists, who will ask you to invest some research resources in their theory in the hope that they'll come up with something incredibly useful.

Usually they do, and early in the game they come up with an improved spacecraft engine, giving all your ships a longer range and larger cargo capacity, or a device which upgrades the efficiency of your power stations and factories. Sometimes though, a promising idea produces something duff, such as a process which turns mushrooms into small Quorn-like steak protein substitutes.



And don't think it's all cosy in the Beta Caeli system, either. A couple of hours into the game, the colonists start coming under attack from hostile indigenous lifeforms, which you can't fend off even by aerial bombardment. You have to race to develop some kind of weapon to use against them, but the only thing you can come up with is a biological weapon which successfully kills off most of the creatures, and soon after starts killing the colonists too.

Then your scientists discover that the creatures seem to be compelled to act aggressively by some external influence. Could it be something to do with the mysterious energy beams which are being directed at the planet? Could this confirm your military officer's fear that the Centaurians have followed the Calypso to Beta Caeli to destroy the last remnants of the human race? Or what?

The spine-tingling intrigue, the problems of safe-guarding colonists, the reports from different crew members in different departments aboard the Calypso, and the general feel of scientific authenticity gives Alien Legacy the atmosphere of an episode of Star Trek: The Next Generation.

At the start of the game you don't really give a hoot about what happened to the Tantalus, and are happy to just build colonies, but as things progress the plot draws you in, until you really get the feeling that something sinister is going on in the background somewhere and you have to get to the bottom of it.

Apparently there are five major plot lines running through Alien Legacy, but after a week of playing I get the impression I've barely scratched the game's surface. There's a lot of scope in your decision making which makes for a lot of routes through the game and lots of different endings — and I anticipate playing this game until I get to one of them. It's that good.

ALIEN LEGACY

Sierra/Dynamix

(0734) 303322

£39.99 Out Now

MINIMUM SPEC

25MHz 386, VGA, 4Mb RAM, 22Mb of hard disk space and mouse.

ALSO SUPPORTS

Sound Blaster, Pro Audio Spectrum and Gravis UltraSound soundcards.

THE GOOD...

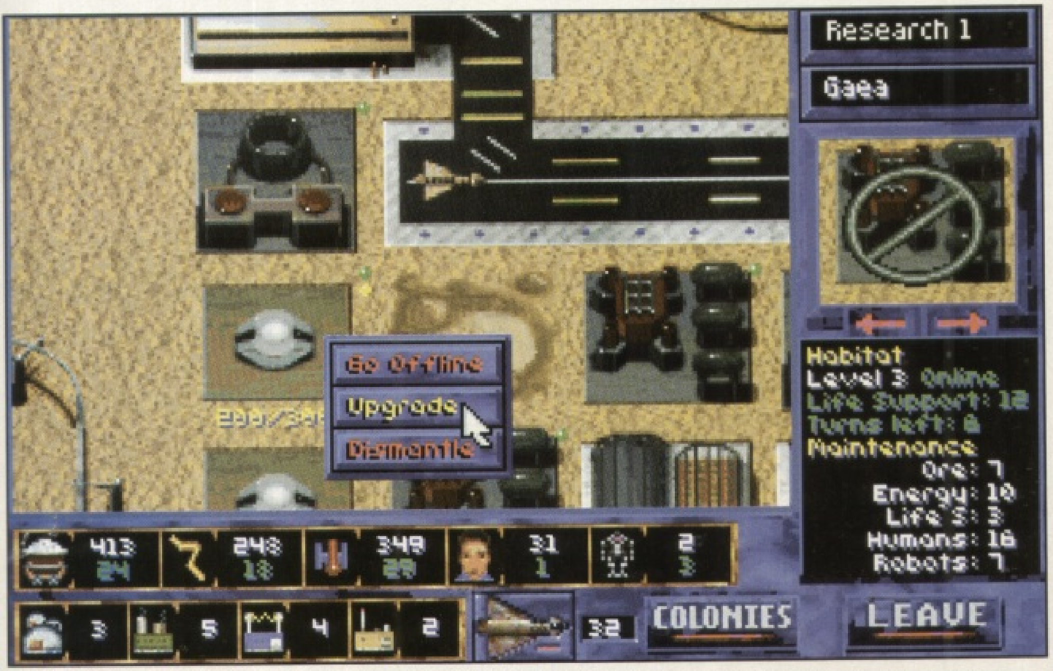
- Gameplay which gets more engrossing and more atmospheric as you play.
- Good icon controls and menus which you can call up anywhere.
- Some nicely rendered animated cut-scenes serve as rewards for getting through crises.

...AND THE BAD

- Well, they're not bad, exactly, but sometimes the graphics look a bit naff.
- The colony management bits can bog you down when you want to get on with some of the more interesting exploration.

Overall

85%



Research 1

Gaea

Habitat
Level 3 Online
Life Support: 12
Turns left: 8
Maintenance
Ore: 7
Energy: 10
Life S: 3
Humans: 18
Robots: 7

A lot of the technological breakthroughs your scientists accomplish can make your colony more efficient, so be sure to keep some man-power resources on stand-by so you can upgrade buildings whenever possible.

Micro Machines

Alex Fraser toys with the prospect of reviewing the Codies' cutesy racing game.

You know, there was a time when certain unkind journos would pour scorn on the Codemasters, with their never-ending range of 'simulators', their quotes from the Darling brothers on the boxes ("This game is brilliant!" — The Director Of Code Masters) and, of course, their immense wealth, their Ferraris and their huge farmhouse office complex in rural Oxfordshire.

But the envious sneering had to stop when they released Micro Machines, an incredibly simple racing game which everybody in the world loved and which topped various charts for... ooh, ages.

But that's hardly surprising, because as a tie-in with the tiny toys Micro Machines it's marvellous. Remember how, when you were seven-years-old, you used to drive your toy cars around the kitchen table, or sail motorboats around the bathtub, or drive toy tanks around the garden, all the while making a 'NEEEEYAAAOOOW' sound? Well I bloody do, and Micro Machines revives all of those happy memories and turns them into a racing game — though in these days of spacemen and microwave-able convenience foods the computer handles the sound effects.

The game puts you at the controls of all sorts of vehicles — sporty speedsters, Formula One cars, 4x4 trucks, boats, helicopters and more — most of which have their own handling nuances. You get to drive these either in tournaments against gangs of computer drivers or in a head-to-head two-player race, and all you have to do is finish each of the tracks in first position so that you can go on to the next one.

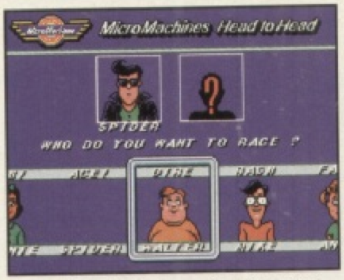
The action is viewed from above in a square window, which makes it look like the programmers couldn't get their scrolling routine to move the full screen fast enough, though it may have something to do with the fact that if the display was wider than it was high, it would be much easier driving left or right because you could see more of the road ahead. Does that make sense?

The actual driving is simple enough. The cursor keys handle the steering and the accelerating, and the brake key also reverses the car, which is lucky because if you stray off the chalk-marked track you often end up stuck in roadside obstacles, like bundles of 13-amp fuses or piles of pebbles. That sort of trouble is inevitable because the other cars think nothing of bouncing you off the track, or even shooting you off it if you're in a tank race. But then you can do the same to them, so it's not all bad.

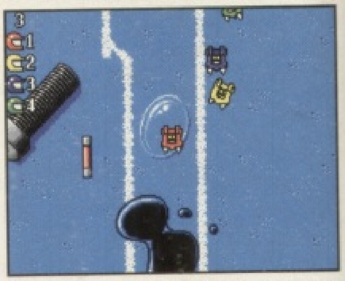
The single-player mode is good fun, though your car always seems to have the better batteries (or something) which give you a much better turn of speed than the others, so winning the first dozen or so races is a piece of cake.

But the best way to play Micro Machines has always been with two players, though it's not as easy to see two people hunched around opposite ends of a PC keyboard as it is to see them thumbing their way around with NES controllers. Nevertheless, if you do happen to have a friend, getting them to join in will definitely result in big fun.

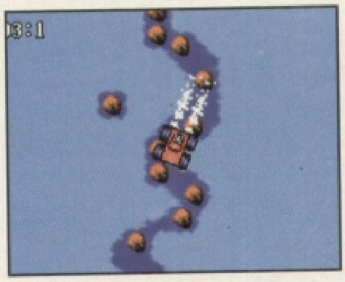
The final plus is that you can play Micro Machines from Windows. Alas, you can't play it *in* a window, but at least you can put your spreadsheets on hold for a while to have a burn around the breakfast table.



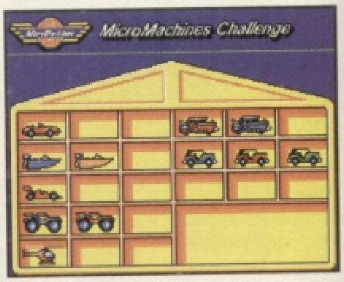
In one-player mode you can handicap yourself by playing a weaker character, but I had as much success with lardy no-hoper Walter as I did with alleged ace Spider.



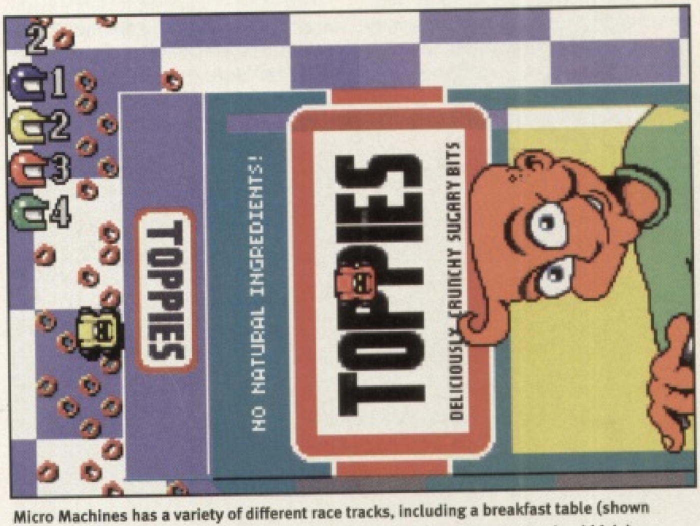
Racing in the garage poses its own particluar set of problems. As well as racing against the other cars, you have to dodge oil spills, blobs of glue and assorted nuts and bolts.



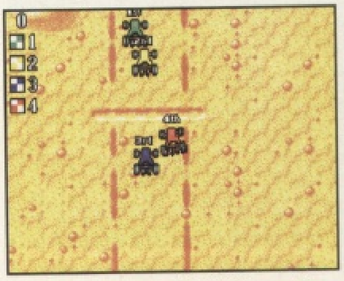
Win three races in single-player mode and you get to bump around the obstacle-strewn Ruff Trux track. Manage to complete it within the time limit and you earn an extra life.



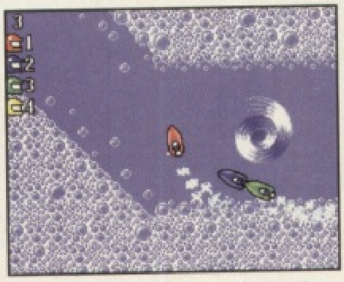
As each race is completed the relevant vehicle goes into your Micro Machines collector's cabinet. Only 13 more races to go and I'll have won the tournament!



Micro Machines has a variety of different race tracks, including a breakfast table (shown above), a sandpit, a bathtub and a snooker table. None of your Brands Hatch rubbish here...



Multi-player action in the kiddie's sandpit.



Look out for the plug-hole in the bathtub!

MICRO MACHINES

CODEMASTERS/IN-HOUSE

(0926) 814132

£29.99 OUT NOW

MINIMUM SPEC

16MHz 286, VGA and 1Mb of hard disk space.

ALSO SUPPORTS

Joystick; Sound Blaster soundcard.

THE GOOD...

- Good fun in single-player mode...
- ...And the fantastic two-player mode is even better.
- Runs on just about anything.
- The toy tie-in works admirably.

...AND THE BAD

- You do get the feeling it should have looked better on the PC.
- The PC speaker sound is horrific.

Overall

85%

THE ULTIMATE HARD DRIVE FOR PC

THE ORIGINAL
Micro Machines
SCALE MINIATURES
TM
TOPPIES
NOW AVAILABLE

"Consistently entertaining and relentlessly addictive - a fabulous racing game" 90% PC GAMER.

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Dark Sun
Wake Of The Ravager

Since Alex Fraser likes odd-shaped dice, it was only fitting that we let him review SSI's latest RPG.

Dark Sun: Wake Of The Ravager is a role-playing game, so you'd expect the plot to follow something along the lines of: evil wizard-type person wants to take over the world, kill everyone and do unspeakable things to small furry animals. Which is more or less correct in this case, except that in Wake Of The Ravager, the main boss dude is a dragon and his second-in-command is the evil wizard-type person.

Assumption Number Two is that you (or your intrepid bunch of heroic and brave adventurers) is the only person (or people) stupid enough to try and stop him (or them). Right again. On the cruel, harsh, desert world of Athas, most of the citizens are just too morally corrupt to give a hoot, and will happily sit around swigging ale and singing about gold while the world collapses beneath their bone-idle butts. So it's up to you. Again.

What we have here is your basic issue RPG. It's got elves and dwarves and wizards (though wizards are called 'preservers' in this game, which is a laugh because they're the ones who turned Athas into a desert in the first place) and magic amulets and the like, not to mention things like stats and hit points and armour classes.

The only difference between this and your standard AD&D game is that it's set on a different world, and I've already talked about that. Dark Sun: Shattered Lands was the first game in the series, and this follows in roughly the same vein. It's a top-down perspective game (i.e. you move your party of four adventurers around a landscape which you view from above) and you control movement, talk to people, kill monsters and manipulate objects by clicking on them with your mouse.

The control system is one of the best things about Wake Of The Ravager, as it happens. There's none of this getting stuck in a doorway business simply because you haven't quite managed to click on the right pixel — you just click on the place where you want to go and you party... er... goes. And if you want to go somewhere which is so far away that it isn't visible on-screen, just bring up the overhead map and click on that instead. Brilliant.

As for talking to people, well, as you'd expect there's quite a lot of that going on in the game. Most of your progress is made by saying the right thing to the right person and, believe me, there's so many people to talk to that you end up with eye-strain from reading all the text involved.

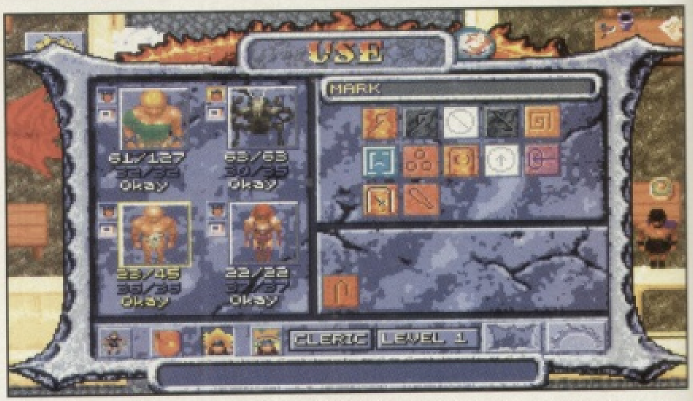
Let's say you want to get inside a building to get proof of some wicked plot. Okay, that sounds a simple enough task, but how do you get in? Someone points you in the direction of a thief who might know the answer. But the thief won't tell you until you've cleared her debt to a local trader, so you go and visit the trader and talk to him in reasonable terms.

Now you don't have the money, so he sends you on an errand to give a document to a crooked miner by way of payment. You give the document to the miner, and return to the trader. The trader clears the thief's debt, so you go back to the thief with the good news. The thief says "Ta very much, here's the key to the building."

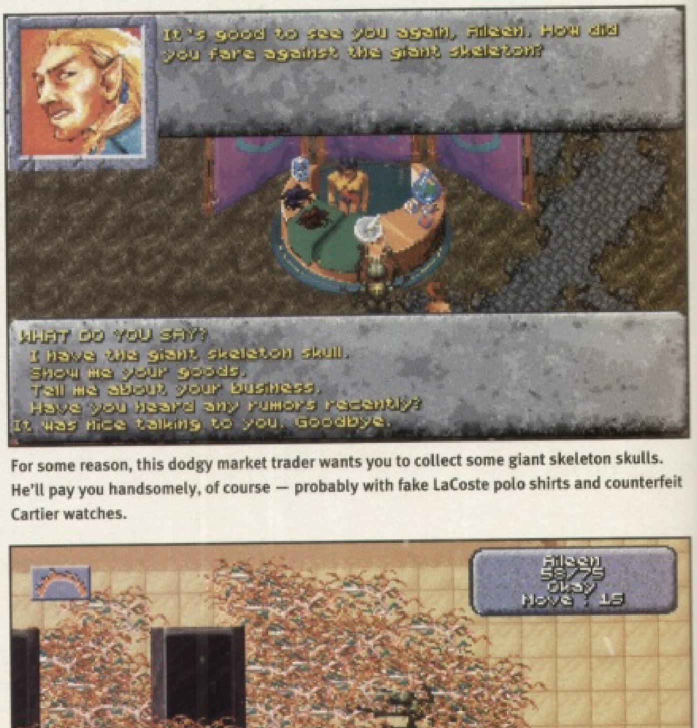
Why is nothing ever simple in RPGs? Supposedly because completing all the quests and sub-quests gives you a sense of achievement and keeps you interested. Mind you, in real life I'd just hold a knife to the thief's throat and say "Give me the key or I'll be cutting you an extra grin," or something similar. But this is a game, right?

Anyway, the point is that conversations all appear as text, and it's a case of selecting replies from the list of options at the bottom of the screen. And because you end up talking to so may characters and going through all the possible replies (wouldn't want to miss a clue, now, would we?) you end up reading a lot of text — which is why you get eye-strain.

When it comes down to it, though, Ravager is quite good fun. It's entertaining, and you do get swept along by the



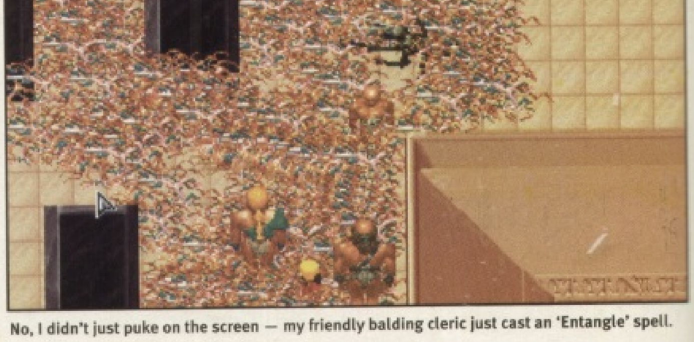
The spell screen. Choose your spells here. Now should I go for that nice pink brain-bursting number, or the pretty turquoise one which blows their arms and legs off?



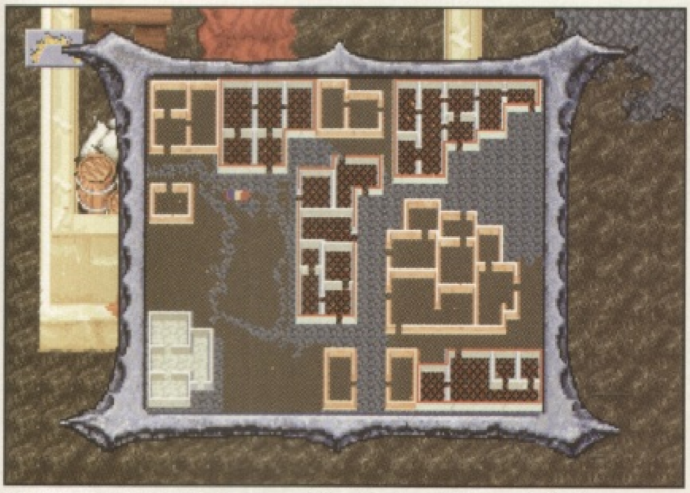
It's good to see you again, Aileen. How did you fare against the giant skeleton?

WHAT DO YOU SAY?
I have the giant skeleton skull.
Show me your goods.
Tell me about your business.
Have you heard any rumors recently?
It was nice talking to you. Goodbye.

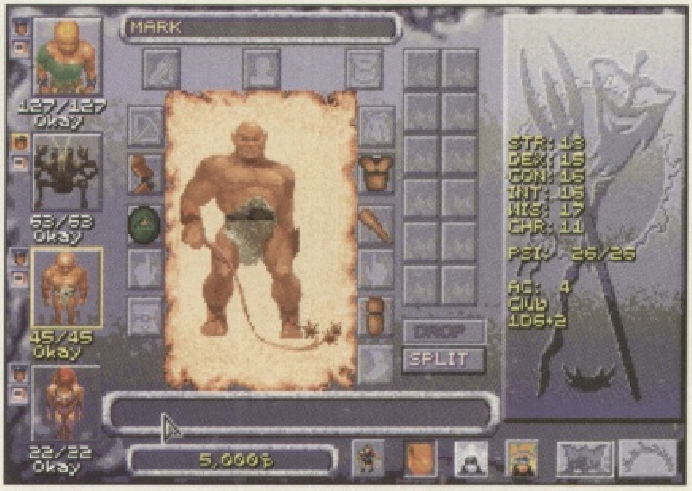
For some reason, this dodgy market trader wants you to collect some giant skeleton skulls. He'll pay you handsomely, of course — probably with fake LaCoste polo shirts and counterfeit Cartier watches.



No, I didn't just puke on the screen — my friendly balding cleric just cast an 'Entangle' spell. Ooh, it'll take ages to clear that lot up.



It's a map, stupid. A map! You know, one of those things which helps you to find your way around. Yes, a map. Oh, why do I bother?



The inventory screen. Do I really need to explain this one? Okay, then, this is where you keep you inventions, I mean belongings. Clothes and stuff. You know.

plot. One minute you're a pathetic bunch of no-hopers trying to figure out what the hell's going on and getting beaten up by muggers in dark alleys; the next you're members of a secret organisation plotting to overthrow the evil authorities.

And, sadly enough, you do get attached to those miserable characters of yours, and it's actually exciting when one gets enough experience points to move up a level and learn a new spell. Which is a bit of a sod when they get killed, of course.

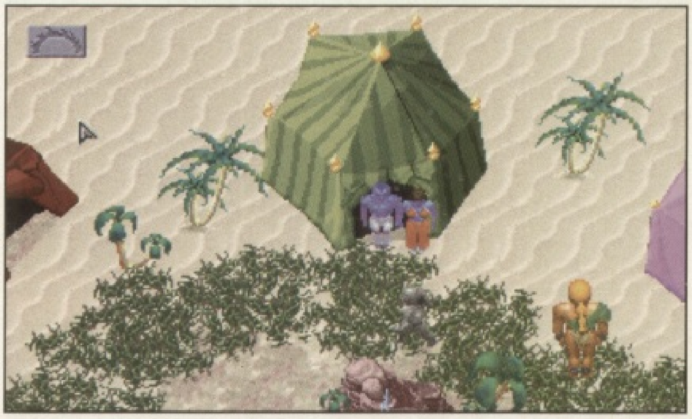
Of course, Athas, like every other world in an RPG, is very, very dangerous. You get attacked by monsters all the time, so you have to be pretty handy with your sword or spellbook if you want to come out it in one piece. Combat is turn-based, much like in the original table-top RPGs, which basically means that your four characters each have a go, and then the monsters each have a go. Then it's your turn again, and then the monsters have another go, and so on until one side of the conflict is completely wiped out.

This isn't too bad when there are only a few monsters, but if there are a lot of critters trying to rip your guts out (or whatever) you have to wait ages for them all to finish attacking you until you take your go again — and that, frankly, is a pain in the posterior. Still, I've seen plenty of worse combat systems so I suppose I should thankful.

Ravager, as it goes, is an okay game, but it's far from perfect. Combat is one weakness (if a minor one), graphics are another — it's no Ultima VIII, that's for certain. After sitting though a really dreadful intro featuring badly-drawn graphics and some of the worst accents I've ever heard sampled, I wasn't too surprised when the in-game screens were pretty average.

By some strange coincidence, Dark Sun: Wake Of The Ravager bears a truly startling resemblance to SSI's earlier Dark Sun: Shattered Lands — in other words, I don't think any progress has been made on the graphics front in between the two games.

Oh, it doesn't look that bad — it's reasonably colourful and you can see what's going on well enough — but the visuals are pretty basic. I also noticed several glitches, whereby bits of sprites were left on screen long after they'd walked off in another direction. That's sloppy, SSI guys.



Anyway, the long and the short of it is that Ravager is a diverting game with some good plot-lines, but it's not quite up there with the Ultimas and it's not something that show to your mates if you wanted to impress them. I liked it, but you have to bear in mind that it would be heavy going for RPG virgins and not quite exciting enough for those used to more sophisticated fare. Basically (and without wishing to take the easy way out) if you liked Shattered Lands, you'll like this.

DARK SUN

Mindscape/SSI

(0444) 246333

£44.99 Out Now

Minimum spec

33MHz 386, VGA, 4Mb RAM, 30Mb of hard disk space and mouse.

Also supports

Sound Blaster soundcard.

THE GOOD...

- The control system is very easy to get the hang of and very friendly.
- A big game which'll keep you quiet for ages.

...AND THE BAD

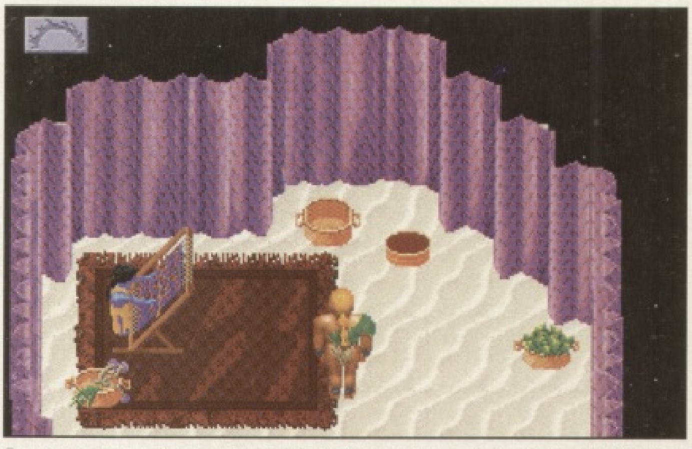
- Decidedly average graphics that just don't cut the mustard these days.
- The intro is awful — and that's being kind.
- Well, it's not exactly original, is it?

Overall

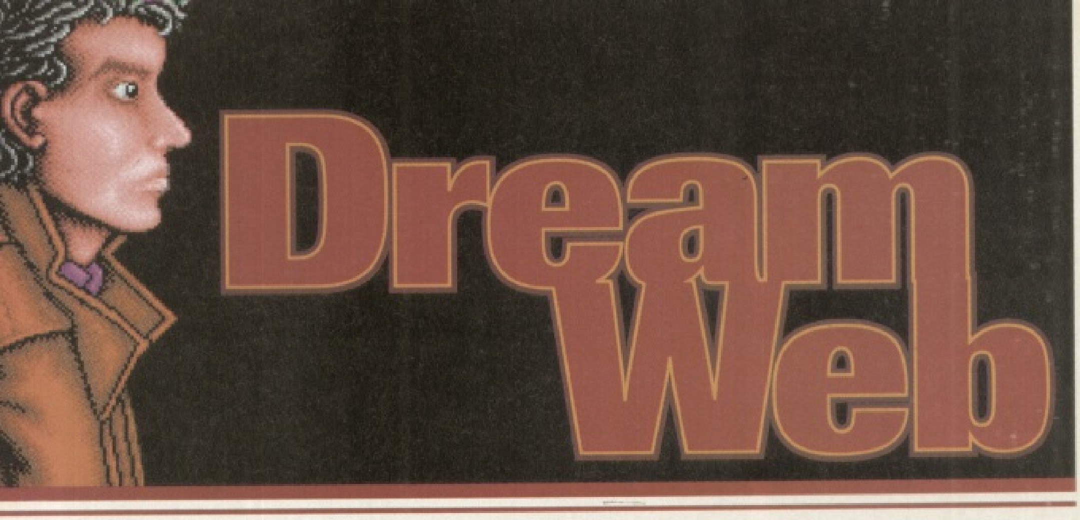
76%

It's a bit like...

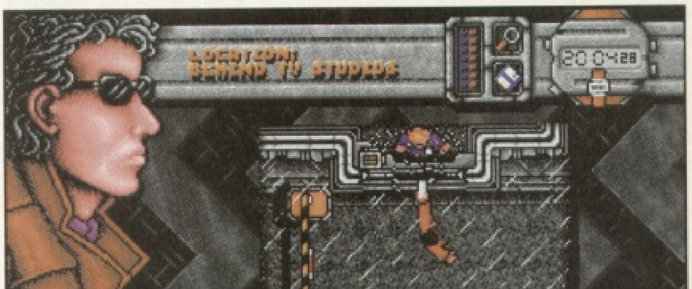
Ravager's an awful lot like Al-Qadim, which is not surprising because they're both by the same company. Only Al-Qadim's a bit easier, a bit more accessible and quite a lot more fun. It's set on an Aladdin-style eastern world, with genies and carpets and stuff, rather than orcs, goblins and elves. Good.



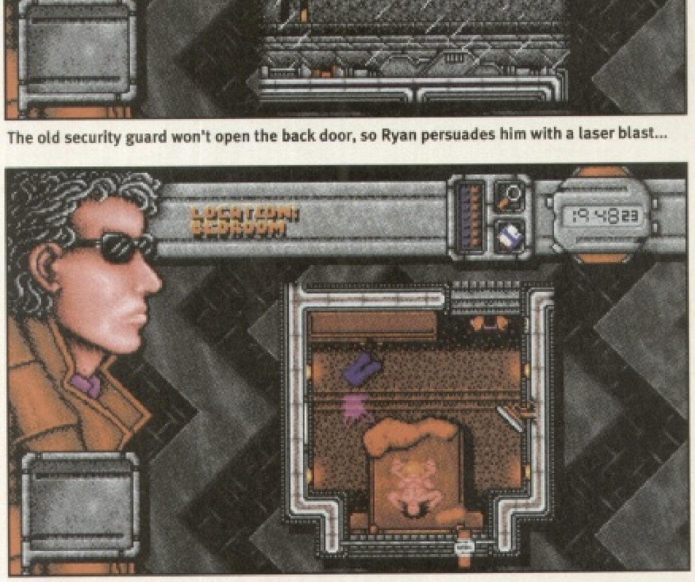
For some reason, genies' tents are bigger on the inside than they are on the outside. Did they invent the Tardis, or something?



Dream Web



The old security guard won't open the back door, so Ryan persuades him with a laser blast...



Dream Web is an adult adventure and it does contain some scenes of a sexual nature. Yes, here's David Crane caught "in the act" before Ryan blows his head off with a laser blast.

Dean Evans gets soaked as he looks for trouble in Empire's cyberpunk thriller.

Friday. April 13th. 11:50pm. "God, the panic's coming back. I'm going crazy — or inhumanly sane. God help me, either way. Sleep... Sleep's dragging me down. Angel, Eden — help me. Don't let midnight strike! I renounce everything. I'll burn my books. Eden, Eden, I'm falling. Falling. Sleep..."

Dream Web is probably the most atmospheric game I've played so far this year. From the twisted rantings in the diary that accompanies it, to the endless roar of the rain and the haunting soundtrack, Dream Web is a game that grabs you by the scruff of the neck, beats you up a bit and drags you into a dark, violent future. If you can imagine Bladerunner as a computer game, then you're very close indeed to the look and feel of Empire's cyberpunk adventure.

Set against the backdrop of a decaying, dystopian future, Dream Web is as violent as it is atmospheric. It tells the story of Ryan, a quiet, downtown barman who is being plagued by recurring dreams of murder, spiders and a bloke in a Santa Claus outfit packing a .44 Magnum.

It's very powerful stuff, and it's all described in the Diary Of A Madman, a novella that comes packaged with the game. The diary is much more than a cosmetic extra — not only does it flesh out Ryan's character, but it also reveals certain important game information. You may not understand it all at first, but figuring out Dream Web's tortuous plot is half the fun.

And as far as the plot is concerned, it appears that in the future, mankind's collective subconscious is balanced and regulated by the Dream Web, a device composed of pure thought. Protected by seven immortal monks, the Dream Web has been stable for thousands of years. However, as the game opens, the balance of the Web is being threatened by seven evil usurpers, who plan to join forces, wreck the Dream Web and transform the Earth into a blasted wasteland.

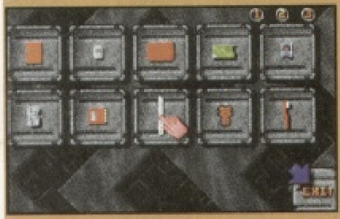
Obviously the monks — lifelong subscribers to What Pacifist? magazine — can't defend the Dream Web themselves, and so they have chosen Ryan (i.e. you) to do it for them. From the fragments of his last dream — illustrated by the moody intro sequence — all you know is that you've got to find and kill these seven people.

The first of these is a rock singer named David Crane, but you've no idea where he's staying or how to kill him. There's a good chance you're going to need a gun but where do you get one? You haven't got any money and your memory is a complete blank. The game, as they say, is afoot.

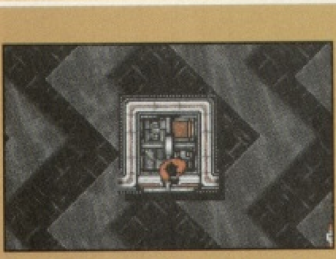
As I've mentioned, Dream Web is basically a graphic adventure, combining a top-down, Chaos Engine-type viewpoint with the darker trappings of a cyberpunk thriller. It's highly atmospheric and, with its computer networks, holo-whips and spiritual mumbo-jumbo, it has a distinctive narrative and visual style that owes much to the novels of Gibson and Sterling and the aforementioned Ridley Scott movie, Bladerunner.

In fact, Dream Web often feels a *lot* like Bladerunner. It's very dark, it has the long coats, the flickering neon signs

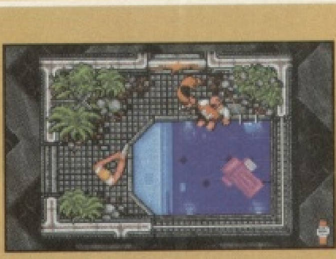
Murder in **Mind**



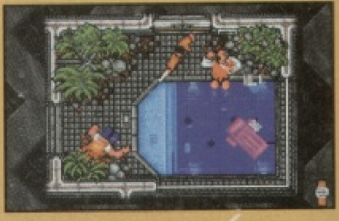
Ryan's first target, David Crane, is holed up in a penthouse suite, but luckily, by using an ordinary kitchen knife, Ryan is able to disable the lift and climb through the roof.



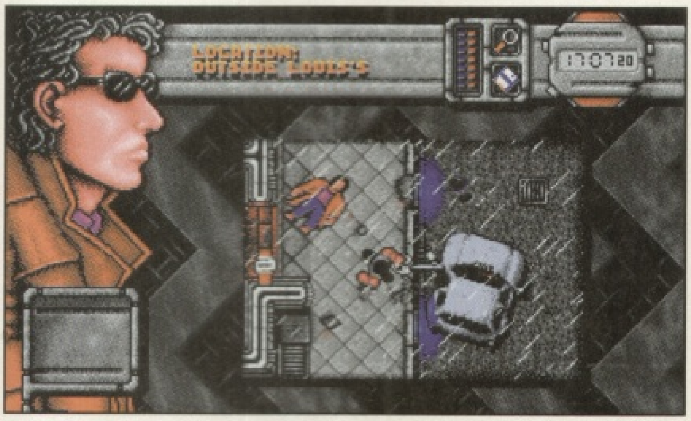
Next, standing on top of the disabled lift, Ryan forces his way through the automatic doors, levering them open using a handy fire axe that he picked up in the hotel.



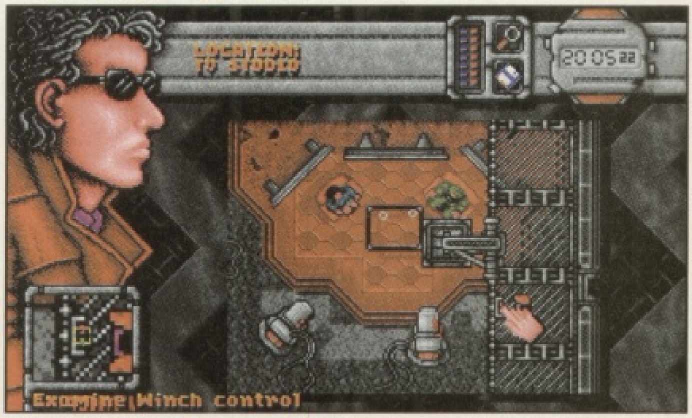
Crane's two goons are relaxing by the pool and, with lightning fast reactions, Ryan kills the nearest one by burying the fire axe in his chest. What a horrible way to die...



Drawing his newly acquired laser pistol, Ryan then blasts the second goon before he can get a shot off. Surprisingly, nobody seems to have heard a thing. Good.



The Dream Web world is dark, dirty and full of violence. If you're not careful, the local low-life will even mug you for a pair of trainers...



Dream Web actually becomes seven individual mini-quests, each with its own particular set of puzzles and problems that must be overcome before you can move on to the next.

and, of course, the endless pouring rain. I half expected a brooding, Harrison Ford voice-over to kick in half-way through, a beautiful woman called Rachel to appear and an Oriental policeman who has a talent for origami to leave little paper unicorns scattered around my flat.

But as I've said, while Dream Web certainly borrows heavily from Bladerunner, underneath the vivid scene-setting whirs the mechanics of a traditional graphic adventure game. The top-down viewpoint makes a refreshing change but, like any other modern graphic adventure, you must still guide your character through the various locations, picking up objects and using them in combinations to complete a series of logical puzzles.

Apart from the usual 'Use object A with object B' gameplay, information is equally important and this can be acquired by logging on to the network terminal in Ryan's apartment. Your electronic mailbox can also be accessed from here, but more importantly you can call up your bank details, local news bulletins or read cartridges — the futuristic equivalent of the floppy disk. In short, the network divulges 'cyber clues', which are not so much important, but vital to your early progress.

For example, Ryan's second target in the game is a military general called Stirling, and according to the news reports on the network, he's giving an interview at the Channel 6 TV studios. Once you have discovered this information, the TV studios appear as a new location in the gameworld, but if you nip along to the building you find that it's heavily guarded and there's little or no chance of bluffing your way in. Hmmm...

However, taking a look around you soon spot a back entrance which is guarded by an old, grey-haired security guard. He's a nice bloke, kind and affable but, unfortunately, he won't let you in either. So all you do is simply draw your laser pistol and kill him in cold blood, quickly, calmly and ruthlessly. With the guard out of the way, you can open the back door using his control panel and sneak inside.

Violence plays a big part in Dream Web and despite Ryan's anguished ravings in the diary, morality soon gets dumped out of the window and he'll think nothing of murdering to get what he wants. It's not a game for the squeamish, and if you don't like the idea of blasting fist-sized holes in rock stars or dropping crates onto generals, then Dream Web is not the game for you.

Unfortunately, bar the adventuring and the graphic violence, Dream Web isn't a game that you can say too much about without giving vital information away. The principal appeal of the game is the mystery, the unknown elements that slowly gel together to form the sinister plot. The actual puzzles themselves aren't really that difficult — most of the time they take second place to the strong narrative, which drives the plot forward with the relentless pace of a driverless juggernaut.

If I have a criticism of the game it's that object hunting often turns into little more than a pixel-hunt. What I mean by this is that you end up minutely scanning every room with the zoom icon, seeking out the cold peas, the cigarette stubs and the plectrums in the vain hope that one of them might be slightly important. And that's the thing about Dream Web — any object could be vital to your progress. You can't even overlook something like dirty cutlery because who knows when you might need a knife or a spoon?

Dream Web is an extremely good game; atmospheric, engaging and very playable. That said, it's an adult adventure with a realistic setting and very real themes. Apart from the violence, there's a bit of sex and the odd naughty word, and if you buy the CD version, you're treated to digitised speech throughout.

A dark adventure, lots of violence and a bit of Bladerunner. What more could you ask for?

It's a bit like...

...Bloodnet, a mix of cyberpunk graphic adventure and traditional RPG. Bitten by a futuristic vampire, you only have a few days to find an antidote to the vampirism coursing through your veins. Recruit gang members, take mind-enhancing drugs and enter the realms of Cyberspace — dark and violent, it's an acquired taste.

DREAM WEB

EMPIRE/CREATIVE REALITY

(081) 343 7337

£39.99 OUT NOW

MINIMUM SPEC

25MHz 386, VGA, 4Mb RAM and 20Mb of hard disk space.

ALSO SUPPORTS

Mouse; Sound Blaster and Ad Lib soundcards.

THE GOOD...

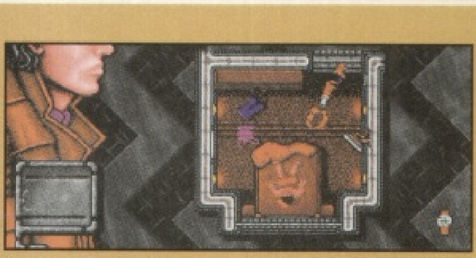
- A wonderfully atmospheric cyberpunk thriller.
- Tightly plotted and engaging.
- A fresh approach to the graphic adventure genre.
- Intuitive and very easy to get to grips with.

...AND THE BAD

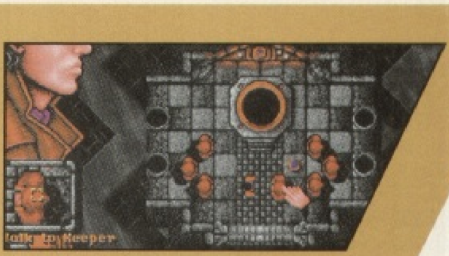
- It's about cold-blooded murder...
- ...And there's lots of it, so keep it away from your kids.

Overall

88%



After interrupting Crane and his latest girlfriend, Ryan waits until she hides under the bed and then blows a big hole in the rock star's forehead. As he dies, a strange blue light erupts from his body, swirls around the room for a moment, then disappears.

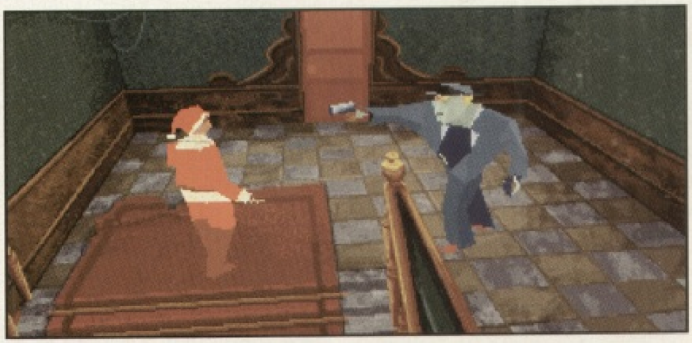


If strange blue lights weren't spooky enough, Ryan is magically transported to the Dream Web itself, where he finally gets to meet the immortal monks that control his destiny...

cd updates

They called him Upchurch, 'Big' Dave Upchurch. He had a thing about old floppy games re-released on CD. Whenever a new one hit the streets, you could always bet he'd be there, watching... waiting... reviewing...

Alone In The Dark 2 CD



I don't scare easily, but I'm man enough to admit that when I played Alone In The Dark I nearly papped my pants. Alone In The Dark 2, on the other hand, was a much more gung-ho affair.

To make an analogy with the movies, if Alone 1 is Alien, then Alone 2 is Aliens (which therefore means that the forthcoming Alone In The Dark 3 will be like Alien 3, so presumably the hero will have his head shaved and be forced to battle the nasties with a rolled-up newspaper. And snog Charles Dance. Brrr! I don't know about you, but my flesh is crawling already...)

Anyway, to keep fans happy during the wait for Alone 3, Infogrames has released Alone In The Dark 2 CD. As in the floppy release, the plot centres around the kidnapping of a little girl called Grace by the Voodoo Princess. After Grace's father is killed trying to rescue her, it's up to the heroic private detective Carnby to save the day.

Alone 2 takes the form of an arcade adventure, with the player guiding the polygon-generated Carnby around the Voodoo Princess' lair, blasting similarly polygon-generated miscreants and solving object-related puzzles.

Although the 3D engine still impresses, it has to be said that with the advent of games like Psygnosis' Ecstatica, Alone 2's angular, clumsy-looking figures are beginning to look a little dated.

Fortunately, however, the gameplay is as gripping as it ever was. In fact, it's even been improved a little — Alone 2 CD is slightly more forgiving and thus easier to get into than it was on floppy, and there's a teleport which will let you skip past that annoying maze near the beginning of the game.

Being a CD game, Alone 2 boasts a wealth of aural improvements, including 22 (count 'em!) CD musical tracks to accompany Carnby's exploits and even the odd dash of speech here and there.

All the same, however, I'm not *really* convinced that this an essential purchase if you've already got Alone 2 on floppy. True, there are twelve new 'scenes' to explore, centring around the park that separates the main house from the cave where the pirates' galleon rests, but are they really worth forking out £44.99 for? On the other hand, if you're a newcomer to the Alone series, what are you waiting for...?

INFOGRAMES/IN-HOUSE

(071) 738 8199

£44.99 OUT NOW

MINIMUM SPEC

33MHz 386, VGA, 2Mb RAM, 18Mb of hard disk space and CD-ROM drive.

ALSO SUPPORTS

Windows3.1; Sound Blaster soundcard.

Overall

87%

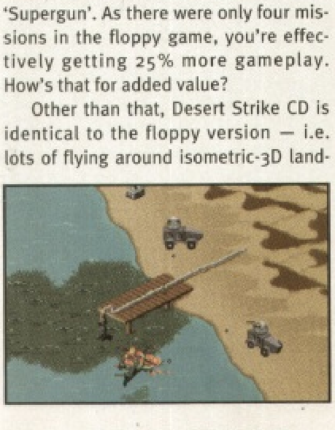
Desert Strike CD

Gremlin are to be congratulated for not taking the obvious floppy-to-CD route with Desert Strike. It would've been *so* easy for them just to bung a ray-traced intro onto the game, showing a shiny, too-perfect-looking chopper blowing up a shiny, too-perfect-looking tank, and leave it at that.

But no. Instead, Gremlin have created a complete extra mission exclusively for the CD, in which the player has to stop General Kilbaba (he's the game's baddy, remember?) constructing a giant 'Supergun'. As there were only four missions in the floppy game, you're effectively getting 25% more gameplay. How's that for added value?

Other than that, Desert Strike CD is identical to the floppy version — i.e. lots of flying around isometric-3D landscapes, blowing things up and rescuing soldiers, while keeping an eye on your fuel and weapon reserves. But there's nothing wrong with that because, as regular readers will recall from last month's review, it's all great fun.

It may not be flashy or particularly 'multimedia', but Desert Strike is one of the more worthwhile — and enjoyable — CD Updates of recent months.



GREMLIN/EA

(0742) 753423

£34.99 OUT NOW

MINIMUM SPEC

25MHz 386, VGA, 1Mb RAM and CD-ROM drive.

ALSO SUPPORTS

Joystick; mouse; Sound Blaster soundcard.

Overall

88%

Ultimate Domain CD

In Ultimate Domain, the CD reincarnation of the 'god game' Genesia, you play the leader of a small tribe of people recently settled in, er, Genesia. You have dreams of ruling the country, but two things stand in your way — a rival leader... and *another* rival leader, each with their own power-crazed ambitions.

The gameplay revolves around strategic resource management. Not only do you have to keep your people fed, watered, housed and happy, you also have to invest valuable man-power in building an army and inventing new weaponry. Only when you've got a thriving community can you even *start* thinking about duffing up the opposition...

Ultimate Domain is one of the better 'god games' of late. Despite the rendered animations (which pop up when you, say, visit the smithy or the church), it's still not the most modern-looking game in the world — compared to, say, Outpost, it seems distinctly '80s'.

However, the quality and depth of the gameplay more than compensate for these aesthetic deficiencies. Genesia or Ultimate Domain — whatever you choose to call it, this is a great game.

MINDSCAPE/MICROIDS

(0444) 246333

£39.99 OUT NOW

MINIMUM SPEC

25MHz 386, VGA, 2Mb RAM, 6Mb of hard disk space, CD-ROM drive and mouse

ALSO SUPPORTS

Sound Blaster soundcard.

Overall

82%

PLAYTIME SOFTWARE

ANCO

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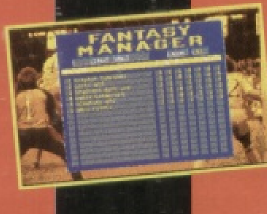

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WARNING

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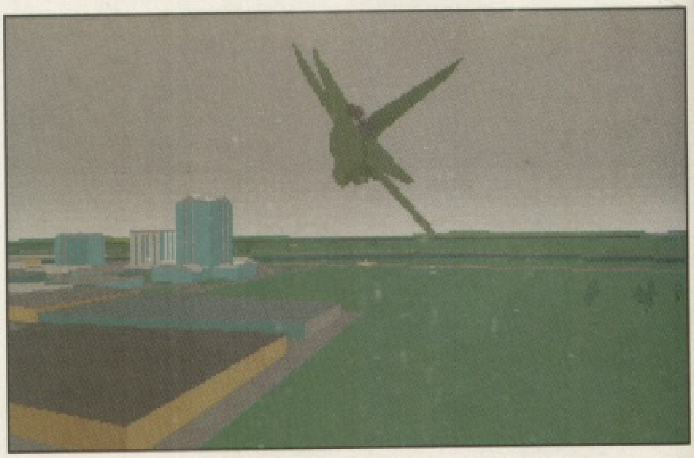
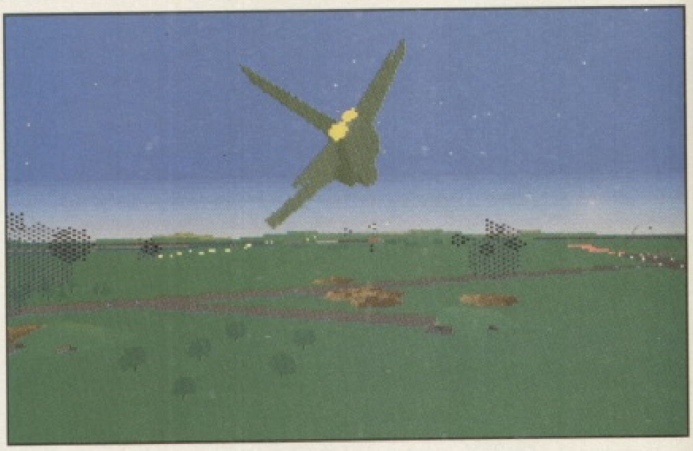
Budget Reviews

If you're a sim fan on a tight budget, then you'll go crazy over some of the tip-top bargains on offer this month. And lovers of graphic adventures are in for a treat too, as a classic LucasArts game gets the cut-price treatment...





Tornado & Falcon 3.0

In their lengthy flight simulating career, Digital Integration have always been a stickler for realism and have had a stoic disregard for the frills and fripperies that other developers put in their games to lure in Mr Average Player — not for them this namby-pamby cutting down on the controls for the benefit of brain-dead arcade fans.

So it makes sense for them to be the ones to release a double pack of the two warplane simulations most respected by the real sim-heads. Tornado is DI's own entry in the package. This one won many plaudits when first released and I can see why. There's not much in the way of instant action, and you have to spend a fair few flight hours in the training missions with the manual open on your knee, but its authenticity is captivating.

Compared to TFX or Strike Commander, the graphics in Tornado look quite simplistic — this is a Gouraud-Free Zone. But the visuals are still realistic, and the level of ground detail and the sensation of speed — especially when you're hugging the hills with the terrain-following autopilot switched on — are superb.

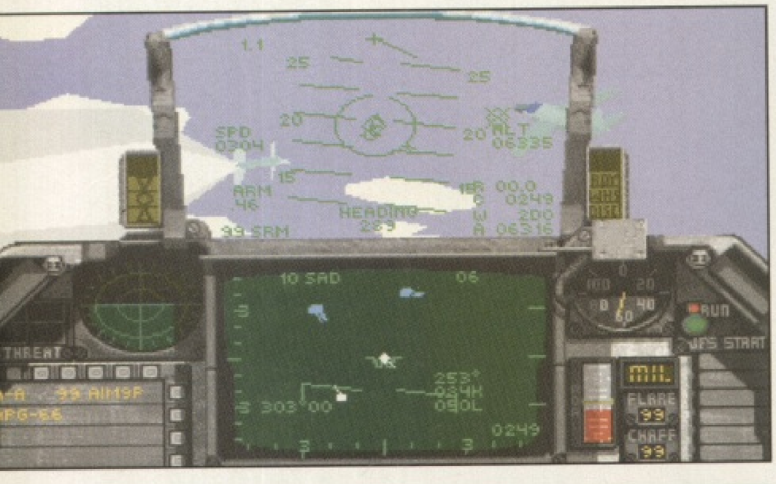
There are 20 training missions, another 20 'real' missions, and three campaigns, providing a further 20 missions each, so you're not going to go short of action. There's also a Command option which lets you plan your own air war, as well as a two-player link-up game for modem or serial play.

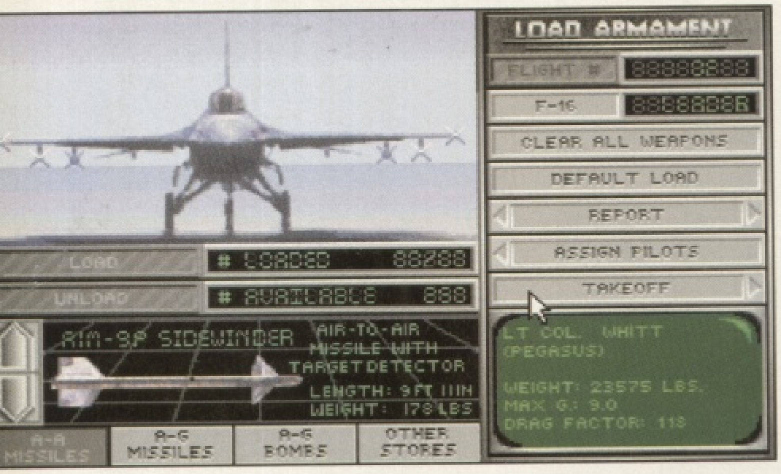
The other half of the deal, Spectrum Holobyte's Falcon 3.0, is getting on for four years old, but it's stood the test of time well. While playing it you can see where lots of subsequent PC flight sim programmers got their ideas from.

The graphics maybe aren't as good and the cockpit displays don't look as real as Tornado's, but it's nevertheless an authentic simulation, with three campaigns covering bombing, intercept and escort missions in three different theatres, as well as a link-up game.

Like Tornado, this isn't a game that you can get the hang of in five minutes. Fortunately, there are tutorial missions that you can follow in the hefty manual, although I found that the text didn't always correspond with the action which was a bit annoying.

Though the aircraft is different, the content of Falcon 3.0 is quite similar to that of Tornado so, as a pair in a set, the two games don't exactly complement each other — obviously it's their reputations for being classic flight sims that's drawn them together. It's hard to imagine discerning flight sim fans being without these two games already, but if you're of that breed, this package offers excellent value for money and shouldn't be missed.





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LENGTH: 9FT 11IN
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DRAG FACTOR: 118

DIGITAL INT./MICROPROSE

(0276) 684959

£39.99 OUT NOW

MINIMUM SPEC

33MHz 486, VGA, 4Mb RAM, 15Mb of hard disk space and mouse.

ALSO SUPPORTS

Joystick; Sound Blaster, Ad Lib and Roland soundcards.

Overall

89%

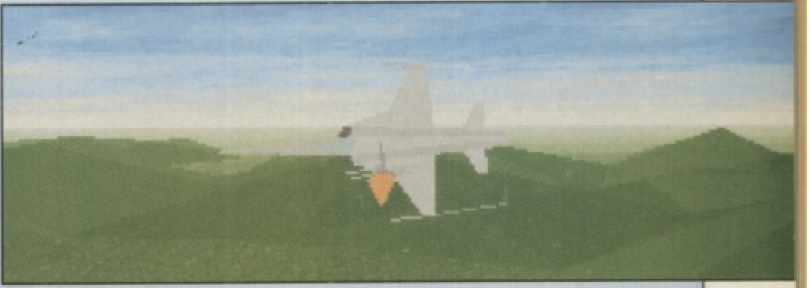
F-15 Strike Eagle III

This is a hell of a good month for cheap flight sims! F-15 III is another Powerplus bargain — one of MicroProse's finest air combat simulations. It takes a step away from the almost arcade simplicity of the second Strike Eagle game and gives you a more realistic array of controls and flight displays to master and threats to avoid or take out.

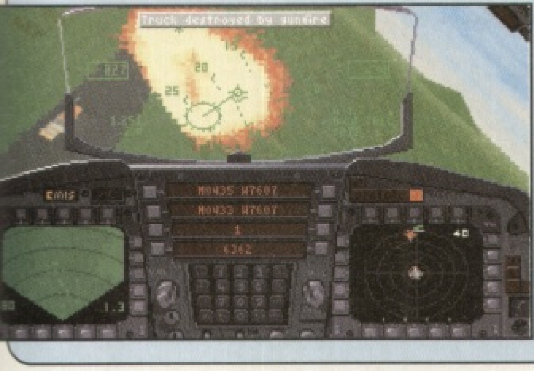
It's definitely not in the same Rocket Scientist's league as Tornado, though, so you don't have to spend hours going through the manual or in training missions before you get to see some action. The missions are the usual Microprose double-objective jobbies, mostly bombing missions with a bit of intercepting along the way. Engage the autopilot and it'll take you to the Primary Target, then a Secondary, then back to base.

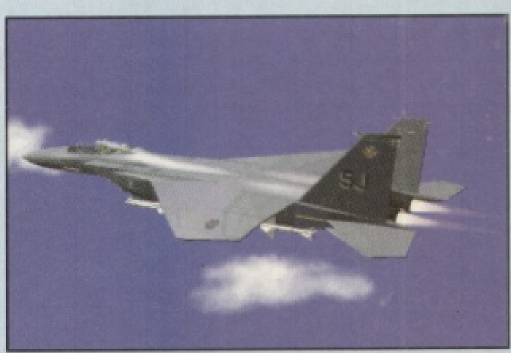
The de rigeur link-up option is included, allowing you to go head-to-head with a connected pal, or take on targets together. A chat mode and a set of 'canned' messages, sent with a single key-press, add to the fun.

The graphics, though looking a little clunky in these days of Gouraud shading and texture mapping, are solid and fast-moving, and the scenery looks pretty good, with lots of ground features and textured surfaces making it easier to gauge altitude. The audio isn't too bad either, and the Sound Blaster engine and weapon effects are good and realistic.



Sadly, however, the title music is just *terrible*. But that small misdemeanor is easily forgiven, as there's no denying that this is another quality release from Powerplus, which offers excellent fun and great VFM at a penny under a measly 17 knicker.





POWERPLUS/MICROPROSE

(0276) 684959

£16.99 OUT NOW

MINIMUM **SPEC**

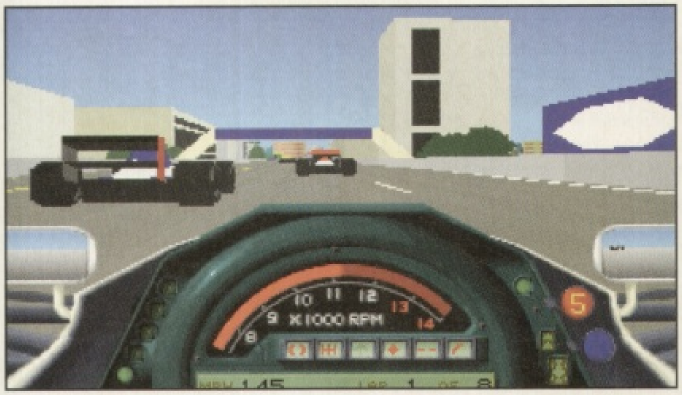
25Mhz 386, VGA, 2Mb RAM and 10Mb of hard disk space.

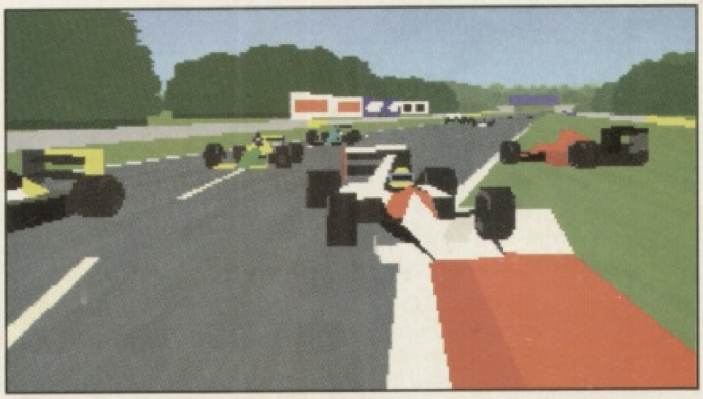
ALSO **SUPPORTS**

Joystick; Sound Blaster, Ad Lib, Covox SoundMaster, Roland and Pro Audio Spectrum soundcards.

Overall

86%





Formula One Grand Prix

Programmer Geoff Crammond has had some pretty fine finest hours in his time. Revs and The Sentinel on the Commdore 64, Stunt Car Racer on, well, just about everything, and F1GP, which was widely regarded as the best computer racing sim in existence until Papyrus edged ahead with IndyCar.

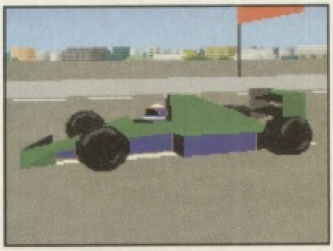
Apparently Mr Crammond is planning to regain the laurels with his forthcoming sequel to F1GP, but those of you who missed out first time round can bring yourselves up to speed for the princely sum of £16.99.

The sixteen circuits of the World F1 championship have been mapped (down to the nearest bump in the road, so they say) for you to hurtle around in a solo, just-for-fun mode or a full-blown tournament. The other drivers are all real-life names in their real-life teams as they were in the 1991 season, so beware of Mansell in the Williams Renault.

The drive feels very realistic, especially if you're running the game on a 486, with the graphics set to high detail and the authentic Sound Blastered engines roaring down your lugs. The cars and scenery are all vector graphics and, even though they're not texture mapped, they look very real and solid.

One of the best things about F1GP is that it's tweakable to the Nth degree. All skill levels are catered for, and junior drivers can take advantage of auto-braking, auto gears, having the best racing line painted on the tarmac, having the car gravitate towards that line when it's not being steered, indestructibility and fixing it so that it automatically steers itself back on the track when you spin off. There's even a two-player link-up.

And, though it's a budget release, it comes with the original 100 page manual — which is excellent. There's not much more you could want for £16.99, so why not give it a go?



POWERPLUS/MICROPROSE

(0276) 684959

£16.99 OUT NOW

MINIMUM **SPEC**

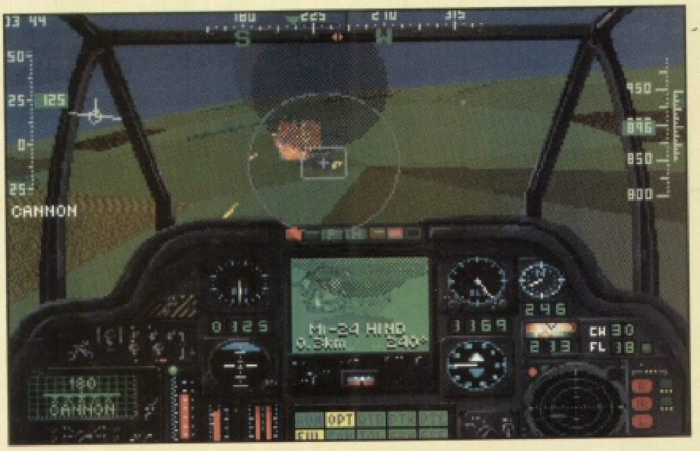
25MHz 386, VGA, 1Mb RAM and 8Mb of hard disk space.

ALSO **SUPPORTS**

Mouse; joystick; Sound Blaster, Ad Lib and Roland soundcards.

Overall

89%

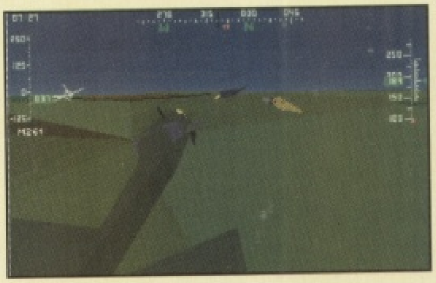


Gunship 2000

As the name suggests, Gunship 2000 is set in the near future, when things obviously haven't changed so much, because the AH-64 Apache is still pretty much king of the rotary wings and you get to take it on strike missions, support missions, search and rescue missions and recon patrols in the Persian Gulf and Central Europe.

In fact, there are two Apaches for you to fly, as well as a Huey Cobra, a UH-60 Blackhawk, a Kiowa Warrior, an AH-66 Comanche and an AH-6G Defender. As with F15 III, the missions are standard MicroProse fare — take off, complete two objectives and come home — but they're action-packed and entertaining.

As you progress through the ranks you even achieve command of your own squadron, and you end up leading five other choppers into battle, planning your strategy beforehand and giving orders in the heat of battle. Good stuff.



GS2000 has all it needs in the gameplay department, but as far as looks go, it's best described as 'homely'. The graphics are drab and very angular, and the first time I came across an enemy helicopter I could barely tell what it was. If it wasn't for the target ID display I would have said it was a flying whale.

A bit more irksome is the fact that the manual, large though it is, seems to have a few flaws — a couple of the control keys are misprinted, and cockpit diagrams that you would have thought should be in there aren't. The only helicopters covered are the Apaches, so if your first mission is in a Cobra things can get a bit confusing.

Most annoying, though, is the software protection which gives you a code to find in a specific section of the manual. Obviously, because this is a cut-down reprint, things aren't quite as they should be and some codes appear twice in the manual, so if one doesn't work you have to look for its identical twin. It's all right once you know, but it's not mentioned anywhere and took me a while to discover.

Still, what do you want for £16.99, eh? Okay, so there are a few dodgy details, but the annoyance is easily outweighed by the fun factor (and the price). What the hell — I'm going to give this one the thumbs-up as well.

POWERPLAY/MICROPROSE

(0276) 684959

£16.99 OUT NOW

MINIMUM **SPEC**

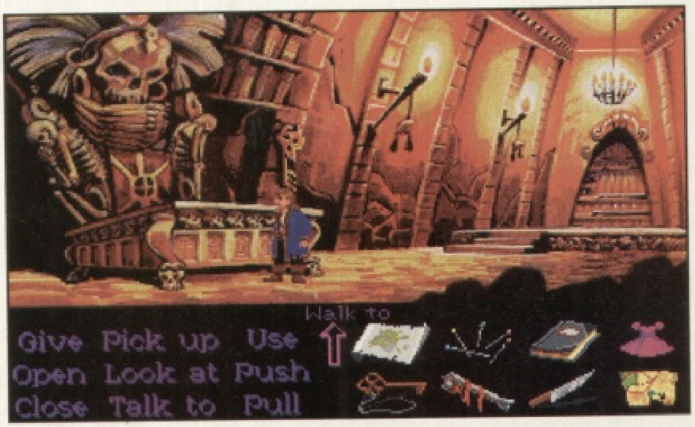
16MHz 286, VGA and 5Mb of hard disk space.

ALSO **SUPPORTS**

Joystick; Ad Lib and Roland soundcards.

Overall

85%



Monkey Island 2: LeChuck's Revenge

It's rare for a sequel to be superior to the original, but that's definitely the case with Monkey Island 2: LeChuck's Revenge, the follow-up to The Secret Of Monkey Island (which was itself re-released on the Kixx XL budget label a few months back).

Monkey Island 2 stars Guybrush Threepwood, would-be pirate. In the few years between this and his first adventure, Guybrush has grown from a pimply kid into a slightly less pimply but more stubbly young man. His quest this time is to find Big Whoop, a fabled treasure of unbelievably great worth.

However, Guybrush's treasure-hunting antics are somewhat curtailed by the fact that he's stuck on Scabb Island, lacking a ship, a crew and (courtesy of a run-in with the local bully and thief, Largo) money. Thus, for the first third or so of the game, Guybrush's exploring is restricted to just Scabb Island, as he works out how to give Largo his comeuppance and find passage off the island.

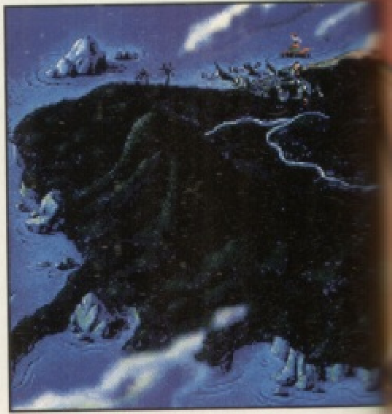
From there the game opens up greatly, as Guybrush travels all over the Caribbean, talking to people, solving puzzles, collecting clues and completing sub-quests, in order to find the secret location of Big Whoop. He also has to contend with the re-appearance of the Ghost Pirate LeChuck who, by means too ridiculous to go into here, has been brought back from the dead — again!

I have to admit I approached re-reviewing Monkey Island 2 with some degree of trepidation. I *loved* the game when it first appeared, but that was nearly three years ago and that's a heck of a long time in the software industry. Would my fond, nostalgic memories be rudely shattered?

Fortunately, they weren't. Monkey Island 2 is just as much fun to play now as it was then. It's a wonderful lesson in game design. By limiting Guybrush's movement in the game's early stages, the player is given plenty of time to learn how the game mechanics work and how to use the player interface (which, to be honest, isn't that long — Monkey Island 2 uses LucasArts' friendly SCUMM game engine which, in my opinion, is superior to the one they used in Sam & Max).

Indeed, I'd argue that in respect to its atmosphere and humour, Monkey Island 2 still has yet to be surpassed. This is a rare treat — and one you'd be a fool to miss out on, especially at the price.

Well, well, well.



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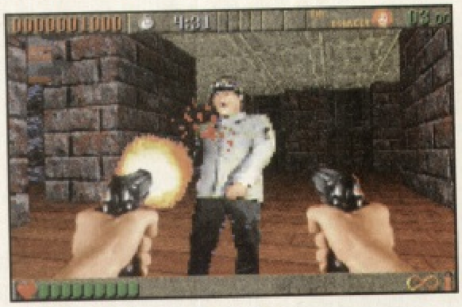
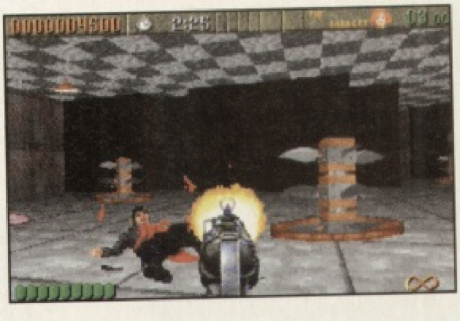
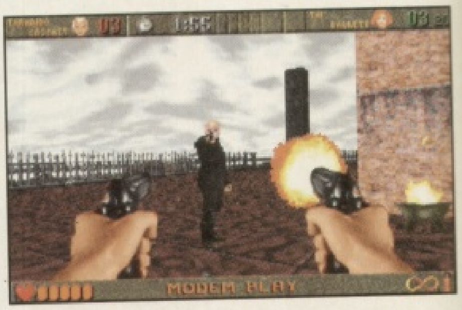
Better than Doom? Tsch, yeah — we've heard that one before. Still, that didn't prevent the ever-hopeful Dean Evans taking an optimistic peek at Apogee's forthcoming Shareware sensation, Rise Of The Triad.

PREVIEW!







Rise Of The Triad

Apogee Software

If you can imagine Doom but with Mortal Kombat-style digitised characters, then you'll have some idea what to expect from Rise Of The Triad, Apogee's new first-person 3D shoot-'em-up, when it's released later this year.

The game revolves around the player's attempts to defeat a sinister cult lead by some bloke called El Oscuro. However, that need not worry you now — all you need to know is that what it eventually boils down to is lots of running around a baddy-infested monastery, letting off an assortment of extremely large and powerful weaponry, while indulging in some basic puzzle solving.

Yes, I know it sounds a lot like a certain Id Software game and, if you've played Doom or any of its recent imitators, ROTT does appear to be average, fairly formulaic stuff. But appearances can be deceptive, and ROTT promises to be much more than just another Doom cash-in. Apogee has developed a powerful and very impressive 3D engine, which not only combines polygon-generated landscapes and digitised characters, but which also allows you to look up and down and even to jump as well.

As you can see, ROTT features a variety of digitised characters (ten, to be exact) instead of sprites and 3D objects and, like Doom, there are nine weapons at your disposal, including handguns, shotguns and the massively destructive firebomb.

During the game you can choose to play any one of five different characters and, like most games of this ilk, there are secret areas to be uncovered, difficult puzzles to be solved, and mysterious bonuses to be found. Of course, there are also game power-ups like God Mode and the rare 'Dog Mode', which allows you to crawl into small spaces. On top of that, there are also fifteen different types of hazards such as SpinBlades, FireChutes, FireJets, PitTraps, and LavaWalls to overcome.

Obviously it's very, very violent and, like Doom, ROTT also has a two-player, head-to-head mode which allows multiple players to battle it out via modem or serial cable. There are nine different battle modes in total, not to mention a wide variety of battle options and the RemoteRidicule(TM) speech capability which, like the Tauntmaker in Wing Armada, allows you to jeer at and insult your enemy using digitised speech.

And as if all this wasn't enough, ROTT also features 20 specific multi-player levels (and this is in addition to the 32 normal levels) and a random level generator. There will even be a level editor made available so you can sit down in the evening and lovingly construct your own.

Rise Of The Triad looks like it's going to be pretty spectacular when it finally appears, and with Apogee currently beavering away on Duke Nukem 3D and a new Ninja game, both of which use the impressive ROTT 3D engine, the future of the first-person-perspective, shoot-'em-or-die-horribly game, looks very bright indeed.

● **Contact: Transend Services Ltd (0274) 622228.**

Where can I get this lovely **Shareware?**

If you're on the look-out for Shareware, here's a list of just some of the friendly and helpful Shareware libraries that you might like to try. Why not ask them to send you a catalogue of their games, or alternatively check this very magazine for adverts.

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(0274) 622228
Testware UK Ltd
(0423) 886415
PD Soft
(0702) 4669

Shareware libraries often charge different prices for the same games so try to shop around to find the best deal.

You'll usually find that you'll pay by the disk, not by the game. This means that if one disk costs £2 then a game like Raptor (which comes on three disks) will set you back £6. Postage & Packing is normally included and, if it isn't, go somewhere where it is.

If you've got a modem, why not try giving the following BBS systems a call. Initial on-line time is free but for more access most systems will charge you an annual subscription fee.

After Hours BBS (0785) 228214
On-Line BBS (0839) 661199/88/77

These games are also available on Compuserve and the Internet.

Going on-line with CompuServe

If you have a PC and suitable communications software, you can log onto CompuServe immediately. CompuServe's London dial-up node accepts all modem speeds up to 14,400bps and can be reached by dialing (071) 490 8881. Simply dial this number and type in the following responses to the system requests:

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We have a tips feast of positively Dave Upchurch-ian proportions for you this month. At long last the complete solution to Al-Qadim draws to a close (thank goodness! — Everybody), and there are player guides to the superb Desert Strike, the fabulous Colonization and, to kick it all off, a little game by the name of Doom 2: Hell on Earth — you may have heard of it...

As you prepare to face death in the ultimate battle, I don't suppose you'd be interested in a few tips for Doom 2: Hell on Earth, would you...?

Doom 2

Doom 2 is difficult. Really bloody difficult. So much is thrown at you — and so quickly — that you frequently have to possess the reflexes of a hyperactive seven-year-old to get anywhere at all.

But, like the original Doom, success in Doom 2 isn't just about running around madly, shooting anything that growls. Of course, there is always a lot of this going on, but Doom veterans will agree that quick reactions are worth nothing if you don't approach each level with something approaching a plan.

Unlike the first game, Doom 2: Hell On Earth often tries to overwhelm you with sheer volume of numbers and while the old monsters, like the Demons, the Imps and the Cacodemons, can be peppered with shotgun fire, for the new boys like the Revenant, the Pain Elemental and the Arch-Vile, you're going to need a bit more firepower.

Although the bigger guns, such as the rocket launcher and the plasma rifle, are much more readily available in Doom 2, like the original game, the shotgun (either the single- or the new, double-barrelled variety) should become your main weapon.

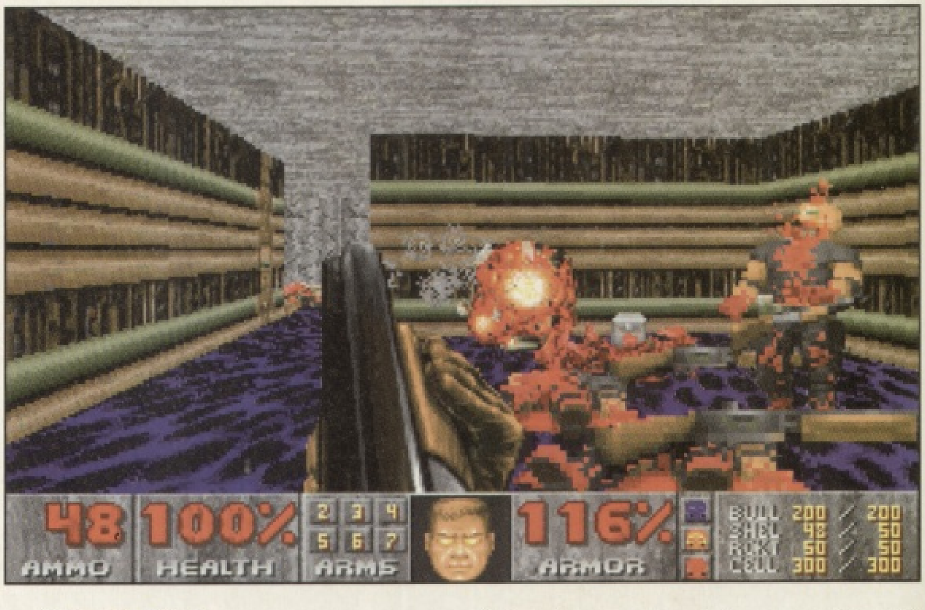
Even if you run out of ammunition for the bigger guns, you still stand a chance in Doom 2 with a shotgun and a chainsaw. Not that much of a chance, I grant you, but a chance nonetheless.

But everybody Dooms in a different way. Some people favour the shotgun, while others wouldn't walk into a dark corridor without their trusty chaingun. Whatever your preference, the basic Doom techniques are the same.

Moving & Strafing

Running, turning quickly and side-stepping are vitally important to good Doom-play. If you're playing Doom using the keyboard, try to practice turning 180 degrees quickly by using the SHIFT key and the left/right cursor arrows.

Also, by pressing the ALT key and the left/right cursor arrows, you can neatly side-step incoming fireballs and even plasma and machine gun fire. This side-stepping action allows you to fight a cautious and much safer battle.



Hide-and-Seek

Despite the fact that you often pack a huge array of powerful weaponry, caution is very important. Running towards a squad of Imps with only a shotgun may well get the adrenalin pumping, but it's a much more effective tactic if you use the surrounding walls and doors as shields.

Hiding behind hard cover is especially useful when you're fighting the Imps, Cacodemons, Hell Barons and the Arachnotrons. Simply use the ALT key (or the right mouse button) to nip out from behind your chosen wall, let off a few pot-shots and then nip back behind it again before your enemy fires back.

Obviously, this tactic is slightly less effective against the Revenants, who fire homing missiles that have a nasty habit of going around corners.

Catch 'Em In A Crossfire

The legions of Hell are very, very stupid. They don't mind who they kill and, if you can trap them into murdering each other, you can clear a room without (a) getting hurt and (b) firing a shot.

This is best achieved by firing a couple of shots at a crowd of demons and then quickly running away. Hide round a suitable corner and wait for a bit while they kill each other. After 30 seconds, nip back round again to pick off any Hellspawn that are still looking for a fight. Easy.

The Barrel Shot

If a demon is standing anywhere near a toxic waste barrel, shoot the barrel and the explosion will kill or seriously damage any hellish miscreant unfortunate enough to be standing in the vicinity.

Most of the Doom cannon fodder (or 'grunts', as they're affectionately known), like the former humans and the Demons won't stand a chance against an exploding barrel, but unfortunately the bigger bad guys are more resilient. You'll hurt them but you'll also make them very angry.

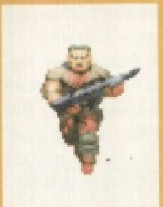
Double-Barrelled Action!

On any level in Doom 2, try to pick up the double-barrelled shotgun as soon as possible. It's a great weapon — rather ineffective at a distance but very deadly at close range.

Save your bigger weapons for the new monsters like the Revenant and the Arch-Vile. Lastly, if you're playing through the levels one-by-one, save your game often using the F6 quicksave key. You can never be too careful.

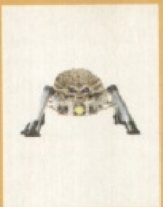
The Bad Guys

Heavy Weapon Dude



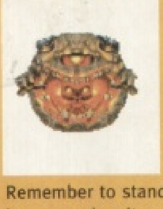
Slow moving, weak but very deadly, the Heavy Weapon Dude is more of an inconvenience than a truly feared enemy. Try to use any natural cover (walls, doors, etc) to shield yourself from his continuous firing, then side-step out, and fire off a single shotgun blast to kill him.

Arachnotron



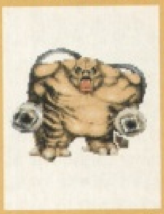
Despite its very effective plasma gun, the Arachnotron isn't very manoeuvrable and this can be turned to your advantage. If you've got a bit of space, stand quite far back and side-step from left to right using the strafe keys. Because the Arachnotron's plasma gun is fixed, the young spider will have to move sideways itself if it wants to hit you and, during the lull in the firing, you can easily pick him off with 4-5 double-barrelled shotgun blasts, two rockets or a blast from the BFG.

Pain Elemental



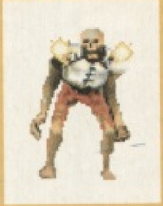
Like the Cacodemon, the Pain Elemental provides Hell's air support, but it spits Lost Souls instead of blazing fire bolts. The chaingun is always an effective weapon against this demon, but rockets and plasma are a much more powerful alternative. Remember to stand back when a Pain Elemental dies, because when it explodes it releases four Lost Souls.

Mancubus



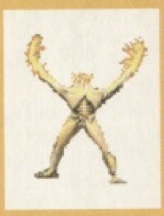
Fat and slow, the Mancubus is also a deadly opponent and, due to its thick hide and dual flamethrowers, it's not the easiest of demons to kill quickly. But if the Mancubus has a weakness it's that it fires its weapons three times and then pauses to reload. If you can, tempt it to fire at you, hide behind a wall and hit it while it reloads. After 4-5 double-barrelled shotgun blasts, three rockets or a direct hit with the BFG, old fatboy will be history.

Revenant



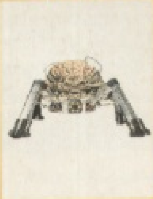
I hate the Revenant. Imagine eight feet of skeletal nightmare, carrying two shoulder-mounted launchers that fire heat-seeking rockets at you. You should try to reserve your biggest guns for these guys because it's important to kill them very quickly. Like the Arachnotron, 4-5 double-barrelled shotgun blasts (if you're lucky), two rockets or a blast from the BFG will sentence old bonehead to oblivion.

Arch-Vile



If you thought the Revenant was bad, wait until you run across the Arch-Vile, one of Doom 2's nastier newcomers. Again, if you've got a plasma rifle, a rocket launcher or a BFG, stand well back and fire them all like crazy. The sooner you kill this demon the better, as not only does it set the ground around you alight, it has a nasty habit of raising the dead. If all else fails, run away. Very fast indeed.

Spider Mastermind and Cyberdemon



Yes, the machine gun spider and that bloke with the rocket launcher arm both return for quick, lucrative cameo roles in Doom 2. If you can't get the big guys caught in a crossfire with other monsters on the levels, the Cyberdemon will give up the ghost after 20 rocket hits, 200 plasma blasts or four BFG bursts. Thankfully the spider is a little easier, requiring only 15 rockets, 150 plasma blasts or 3 hits from the BFG.

The Cheats

Things can get a little rough in Doom 2, so here are the full list of cheat codes to allow you to, er, cheat. Just type in any of the codes below at any time during the game. If you make a mistake, just start again from the beginning.

IDKFA Maximum ammo and all keys.

IDDQD God mode.

IDDT Automap viewer.

IDCLIP Allows you to walk through walls.

IDCHOPPERS Gives you the chainsaw.

IDBEHOLDA Gives you the area map.

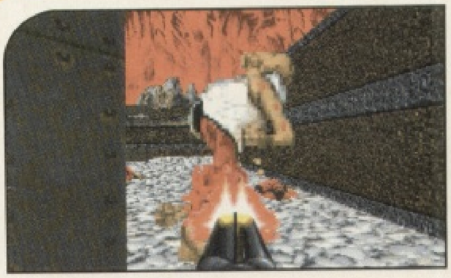
IDBEHOLDI Makes you invisible.

IDBEHOLDS Sends you berserk.

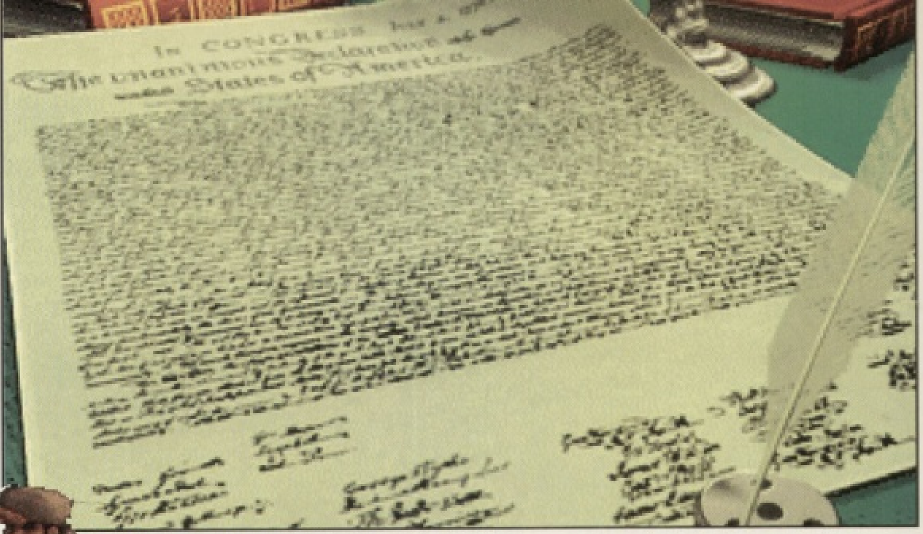
IDBEHOLDV Makes you invulnerable.

IDBEHOLDR Gives you a radiation suit.

IDBEHOLDL Gives you see-in-the-dark goggles.



Life is tough on the American frontier, but with our fab get-you-going tips you can colonise with confidence.



Scouts are invaluable for discovering the lie of the land. Talk to chiefs to find out what villages will trade and to learn the location of treasures. Keep going back to the villages as the game progresses and the chiefs will often give you a valuable present.

Colonization

Getting started

No matter how great the temptation, don't just leap off your ship and found a settlement the moment you sight land. Like Civilization, it's much better to explore the surrounding area a bit to find the perfect location for your town.

But what makes the 'perfect' location? Well, on a basic level, try and establish your colony next to good sources of food, ore and wood. Also, don't build next to an Indian village, because unless you destroy it (and you'll have a serious PR problem on your hands if you do) you won't have as much free farming land or available forests to exploit.

When you've found the perfect spot, use your soldier to found the colony (you won't need to defend it in the early stages of the game). Get the pioneer unit to clear at least one square surrounding your colony and to plough some fields. To be successful in Colonization, you should aim to produce and store as much food as possible.

When your colony is up-and-running, the most profitable trading commodity is coats, which are easy to make because most towns produce fur. As more colonists arrive, use them to farm and to cut down trees. Ideally, you should build a stockade as soon as possible, but it makes sense to go for a lumber mill first as this doubles the speed of production.

Building a better tomorrow

Within your fledgeling colony try to construct buildings in roughly this order: a lumber mill (this doubles the speed of production), a stockade (for defence), a blacksmith's shop (provides increased tool production) and some docks (these are an excellent food source, especially if your town is adjacent to a fish icon).

After this it really depends on circumstances, but you should build a town hall as soon as possible, plus a wagon train for moving goods between colonies (use the pioneer to build roads) and for selling to the natives. If you want to know the trade requirements of the individual villages around your colonies, send in a scout to see what they want.

Try to nip back to Europe regularly (press E) to check up on the price of recruitment, because it fluctuates. It's a good idea to recruit as many specialists as you can, even if you don't need them at the time. Soldiers, pioneers and scouts are bargain buys because they come with muskets, tools and horses. Try dismounting your scouts for a few turns once they are inside the colony. Providing you're producing a food surplus you'll start breeding horses automatically.

Don't look for treasure near neighbouring villages. If you trespass on our sacred burial grounds our braves will attack your settlements

Remember to send your free colonists to me to learn a trade. All of our villages teach different skills. Send a scout to find out what we have to offer and what goods we will trade in.

Colonization is a marathon operation, not a sprint. You've got to expand slowly. Keep your colonies bunched up, for mutual protection, and use your scouts to explore the map, pin-point your rivals and to find lost treasures (it's worth saving up to buy a galleon) and new Indian allies. Like Civilization you can choose when to attack your enemies, so if you discover that an rival has landed close by, it's often worth steaming in straight away before they get too powerful. Otherwise you'll have to play the waiting game.

Obviously the political side of the game is the hardest to master and you should start producing those shiny Liberty Bells as soon as possible, because you get a -1 production penalty for every seven Tories you have in your colony. If your government is inefficient it's better to move the excess colonist(s) outside the colony temporarily — just let them sit on the fence for a turn or two with the soldiers until you've produced some more bells.

Try not to offend the natives unnecessarily, because you will need to trade with them later when the tax rate imposed by your home country gets too high. Don't neglect your defences either and, if at all possible, keep some dragoons handy in a central location to act as fire-fighters and general trouble-shooters.

Independence Day?

Your toughest decision is choosing the right moment to declare Independence. You get a bonus for early Independence, but the biggest factor affecting your score is the size of your population, and that doesn't really start to grow until the later stages of the game. Go for it as late as possible.

If there's Tory feeling in your colonies the enemy get an attack bonus, and sometimes it's enough to whip up a Loyalist revolt. Your ports are the primary target and need much heavier defences than your inland colonies.

The Founding Fathers Paine, Jefferson and Bolivar are best for stimulating Liberty Bell production. Other useful Fathers are Minuit, Brewster, Revere and Washington — but go for the politicians first.

Money isn't everything, you know. The church is vital for the growth of your colonies. The more crosses you produce, the greater the rate of immigration. Missionaries sent to nearby villages will also greatly swell your population, but only if you're on reasonable terms with the natives.

Don't send your goods back from the New World in dribs and drabs. Try and fill your ships first, to take advantage of current prices. Also remember that the cost of goods in Europe usually rises with each purchase, so don't buy individual loads of muskets or tools — buy in bulk whenever you can.

The frilly shirt, silk pantaloons, the beret/feather combo.. don't I look lovely? It's all the rage in France, you know.

Who's Who?

Like Civilization, the European nationality you pick will ultimately affect your strategy. One nation isn't really any better than another, but there's something to be said for each of them...

Spanish

A 50% attack bonus means you have to play aggressively, but try not to destroy too many Indian villages because it'll count against your overall Colonization score. Make sure you get the Founding Father Cortes as soon as possible.

Dutch

Stable commodity prices mean you have to worry less about market forces. However, you'll need large thriving colonies to reap maximum benefit. The Dutch won't come into their own until the latter stages of the game.

English

A higher rate of immigration means you can expand your colonies more quickly at the beginning. The English are a good choice if you wish to pursue an aggressive expansionist policy.

French

Playing the French gives you peace on the home front. Living in harmony with the Indians means that you don't have to defend your colonies until the other Europeans show up.

Whoever you choose to play as, it pays to be aggressive towards rival powers in the early stages of the game — bully them and they might offer you payment. Regardless of treaties, your rivals will always start attacking you sooner or later, so if you have the chance, get in there first! If you capture a distant colony don't try and defend it — close it down and bring the colonists back to swell your own home population.

① Ships

If you've reached your warehouse capacity you can use any ships in harbour for temporary storage.

② Population

When rebel sentiment rises to 50% you get a production bonus; when you get to 100% it doubles. Start manufacturing Liberty Bells as soon as you can.

③ Inside the colony

If you are producing a raw material such as tobacco, build a specialist shop to double the production. It's a waste of valuable resources if you're manufacturing at only half-speed — try to stockpile the materials and only start making the goods when the shop is completely finished.

④ Statesman *(in university)*

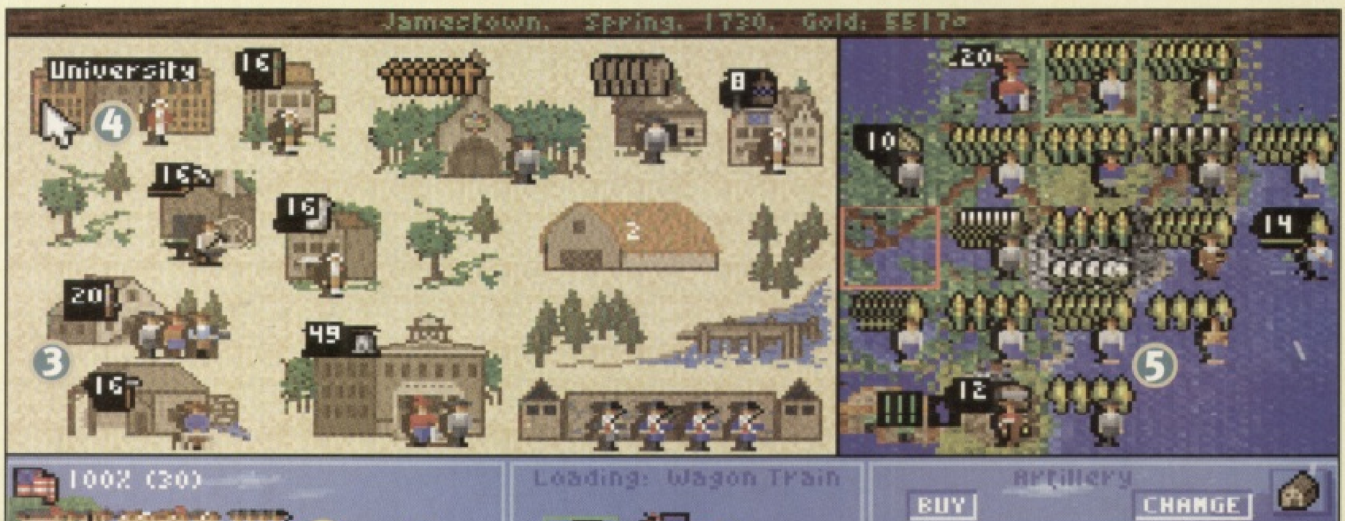
If you don't have a statesman it definitely pays to train one in Europe. The same goes for specialists in the more expensive commodities (silver, cigars, sugar, cloth). One is enough — develop your educational system and you'll be able to make your own.

⑤ Labour force

The vital colony-building resources are food, wood and ore. To avoid shortages, build wagons to ferry surpluses from one colony to another. As long as they're connected by road, the optimum distance between colonies is six squares.

⑥ Artillery

Artillery is the best form of defence, but only behind a fortification — don't let it get out in the open. Dragoons are next best, but unless the colony is under threat you should dismount them to increase the size of your horse herd.

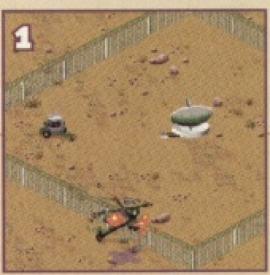


If you're a disaster in the desert, don't get your chopper in a twist (fnurt!). Instead, find instant relief with these step-by-step player's guides to Missions One and Two...

Desert Strike

Objective One: **Radar Sites**

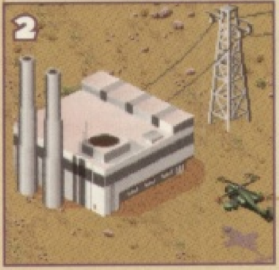
These are a piece of cake. Looking at the map, you'll see that each radar site has a white 'cone' next to it — these indicate the direction that the site's AAA defences are pointing, so approach from the opposite direction. You should then have a couple of seconds to attack before the guns react — use a couple of Hydras to destroy each gun, then take out the radar with the cannon.



Objective Two: **Power Station**

Approach from the left and blast the AAA with two Hydras. Pull back and skirt around to the right of the power plant and destroy the other AAA. Now move within range of the Rapier and let rip with a Hellfire — it won't know what hit it.

Now destroy the power plant by letting loose with the cannon and a couple of Hydras — but don't hang around too long, or you'll find an M3VDA creeping up on you. If this does happen and things start getting out of hand, use Hydras to see it off. And don't forget to replenish your armour using the crate left behind in the power plant's ruins.

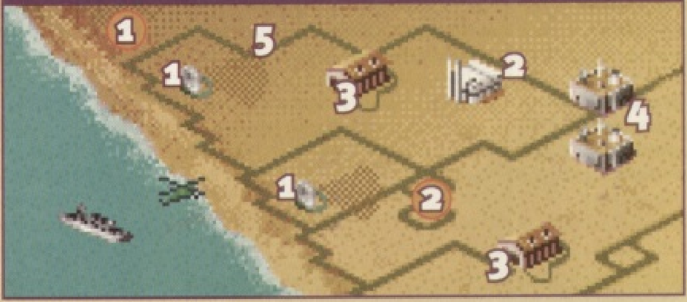


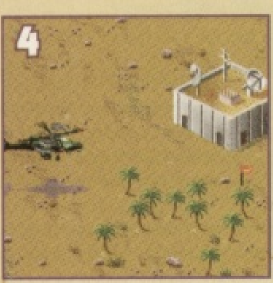
Objective Three: **Airfields**

Each airfield is guarded by three AAA units and two Rapier sites. Skirt around the perimeter of the airfield, taking out the AAAs with a couple of Hydras and the Rapiers with a Hellfire each. Don't waste your rockets on the aircraft — these can be destroyed with cannons. Now take out the buildings, but be alert for men carrying missile launchers lurking in the debris.

While you're blasting the defences, look out for enemy pilots running out of the hangars to their aircraft — if you manage to take them prisoner by winching them up into your chopper you'll earn a big point bonus. If all else fails shoot them for a smaller bonus.

Mission One: Air Superioriity



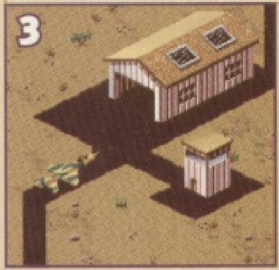


Objective Four: **Command Centres**

You only need to capture one base commander to discover the location of the secret agent, but if you're feeling feisty you can attempt to destroy both centres for extra points. Command centre A (to the north) is surrounded by four guard towers, two Rapier sites and three AAA units, while centre B (to the south) has only three towers, so is *slightly* easier to destroy.

The defences are well spaced out at both locations, so you don't need to destroy everything. Your priorities should lie with the guard towers first, then the AAAs and then the Rapiers — but only if they spot you. The towers are quite narrow targets and are easy to miss with Hydras, and as the guards are armed with missile launchers it's best to get rid of them as soon as possible with a Hellfire.

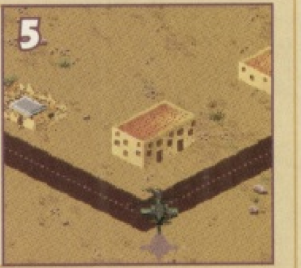
As soon as the command centre is destroyed, the commander will run out. Take great care not to shoot him (!) and swoop in to pick him up. He'll then tell you where the agent is being held.

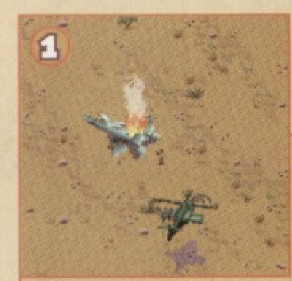


Objective Five: **Secret Agent**

Beneath one of these three buildings is the entrance to the underground bunker where the agent is being held. Under the others are troops wielding missile launchers, so be sure to have some Hydras in reserve to deal with them.

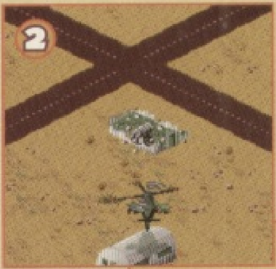
In fact, it's a good idea to stock up on weaponry before you tackle this bit of the mission, because as soon as you've landed and your co-pilot has entered the bunker, three or four VDAs will turn up, and your boys won't come out until they've all been destroyed. Once the agent has been winched on-board, return to the frigate and land to complete the mission.





Bonus Objective 1: **Find Jake!**

Ace F-15 pilot Jake is lost behind enemy lines in this region. You'll find him standing near his downed jet, being shot at by two snipers. Eliminate the two enemy troopers, then winch Jake to safety. Finally, don't forget to blow up the jet, as it contains top secret technology — it'll also reward you with bonus points.



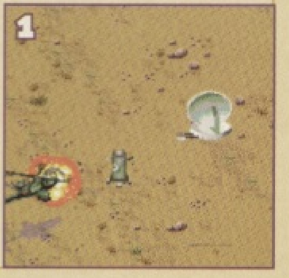
Bonus Objective 2 **Find The High-Speed Winch!**

The high-speed winch, which allows you to pull people and supplies into your chopper much more quickly, is hidden in the top building at this crossroads. Try to get it as soon as possible, because it makes your life so much easier.

Objective One: **Radar Sites**

As in the first mission, it's important to knock out the radar first, in order to weaken the enemy's defences. In this mission, the three radar sites are protected by a combination of AAAs and Rapiers. The one nearest the bottom of the map is protected by just two AAAs, so hit that first, approaching from the left and using Hydras.

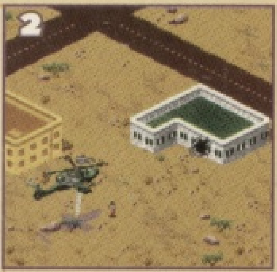
Now fly north-northwest to the next site, keeping an eye out for VDAs and ZSUs patrolling the coastal road. The next radar site has an AAA on the left and a Rapier on the right, so approach from the left, take out the AAA, and then destroy the Rapier with a Hellfire. Make sure you have two Hellfires in reserve for the final site, which is protected by two Rapiers.



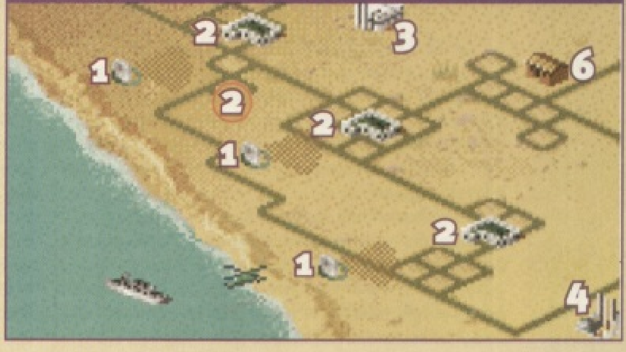
Objective Two: **Jailbreak!**

Head for the northern-most jail first, and destroy the Rapier site on the right before blowing open the jail. To make a quick pick-up, fly over the hole, so that your ladder hangs down next to it. You may find a ZSU creeping up on you, so be prepared to fight or flee. Head for the landing zone and swap the POWs for armour.

Follow much the same procedure for the second and third jails. The middle jail is protected by a Rapier site, as well as two infantrymen and a bloke with a missile launcher on the roof of a building. The southern-most jail is defended by just a Rapier and a handful of infantrymen, but chances are there will also be a ZSU floating about, so make sure you've got a couple of Hellfires spare to deal with it.



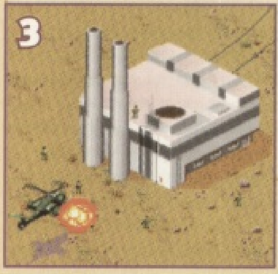
Mission Two: SCUD Buster



Objective Three: **Power Station**

The power station is only protected by five infantrymen. However, three of them have missile launchers, one of whom is perched on top of the power station.

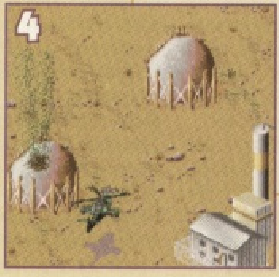
With all this unfriendly fire being lobbed about, speed is of the essence so it's best to employ missiles. Use Hydras on the ground troops, and Hellfires on the power station itself. Don't worry about your shields too much — you can replenish it using the crate of armour that's left behind when the station finally blows.



Objective Four: **Chemical Weapons Plant**

Easy! Head as far south as possible, then approach the plant from the west. Take out the AAA, then waste the main building with cannon fire and a couple of Hydras. Head west and take out the other AAA, then start work on the storage tanks.

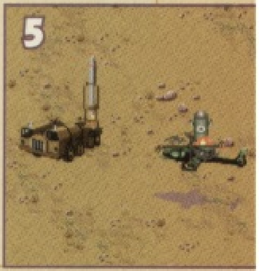
By now, some VDAs may have appeared, but it's easy to sucker them into destroying the tanks for you by hiding behind them and letting the VDAs shoot at you. Once the plant is decimated, blast the VDAs with a couple of Hydras.

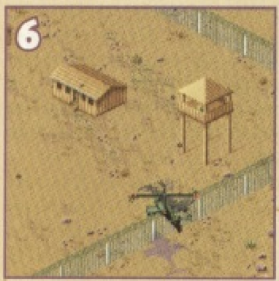


Objective Five: **SCUD Launchers**

Set your map to show SCUD COMMANDERS and you should now see the location of six steel bunkers. Inside each of these is a SCUD commander who knows the position of one of the six SCUD missile launchers. Go to the nearest bunker, destroy any defences and then torch it. The commander will then run out, and once picked up he'll reveal the location of a launcher.

As soon as you find a SCUD launcher, let rip with the Hellfires — if the enemy get a chance to launch the missile millions will die and, even worse than that, you'll lose points.





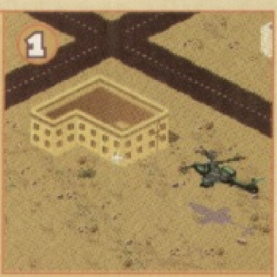
Objective Six: **POW Camp**

The POW camp is guarded by four towers, so skirt around the fence perimeter and take them out, one by one, using Hellfires. Hit the guards inside the camp next, and then blow a hole in the side of one of the huts and pick up all four POWs.

Before heading off for a landing zone (there's one to the south-east), blow open another hut and pick up another two POWs. Always make sure you've got a full payload before making a trip to the landing zone — this way, it should only take three trips to complete this objective. Now head back to the frigate to complete the mission.

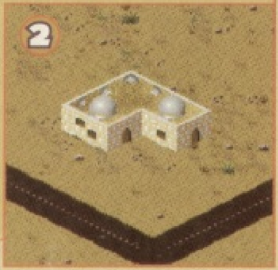
Bonus Objective 1: **Find The MIAs**

In this mission there aren't quite as many MIAs running around in the desert as in the first. However, watch out for flashes of light coming from the windows of the buildings — these are signals from captured soldiers who want to be rescued. Blow up the building to free them — but take care not to kill them in the process.



Bonus Objective 2: **Find The High Speed Winch!**

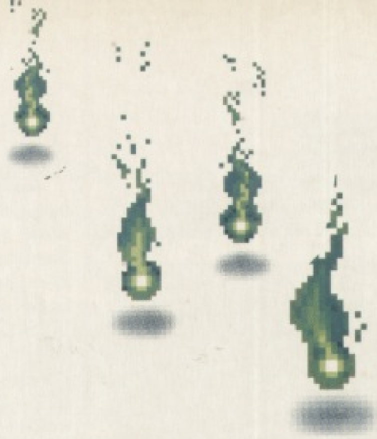
The high-speed winch is hidden in the building shown here. Pick it up after destroying the radar sites.



Next **Month**

All Desert Strikers should stay tuned for equally-excellent player's guides to Missions Three and Four!

We left you last month having just freed the Cyclops from the Old Dungeon. Now you must return there in search of your father, as we begin the final instalment of our complete solution to SSI's adventure.



Al-Qadim

Old Dungeon *II*

In the Cyclops' cell read the note. Pull all six levers and weigh down all six pads to open the door to the east. From here on, pull all the levers and weigh down all the pressure plates that you encounter. Green dots indicate that you have to hit the wall eight times to get a lever to appear.

Go east and then south until you enter a room with eight levers — the fourth down opens the way to a new dungeon. As you explore avoid the gaze of the automatons, because if you're spotted they'll throw you in jail. Now find your father's cell. If you didn't pay to have him moved to a better location then he's where he was before; if you paid 200 Gold then he's near the guards to the west; if you paid 400 then he's to the south-east of your mother's cell.

Talk to him about the nameless masters and then leave the dungeon via the secret tunnel. Drop the key off with Sumia and exit

Evil *Plots Afoot*

By the castle doors you'll find a note. Read it and head for the banquet hall. There you'll find Obdel who'll spill the beans on the Vizier's plans. When you agree to get the journal he'll give you a ring that, when activated in the meditation room in the south-west of the palace, teleports you to the Vizier's quarters. Whilst there, don't touch anything. Tip-toe through the room with the sleeping man and, continuing west, hide yourself behind one of the pillars. When the guard passes by go south.

There are two guards here. Push the tea cart past them and, when they follow it, head south into the harem. Talk to the woman to the east, saying that you're Catspaw. Take the key she offers and agree to put it under the Caliph's mattress when you're finished with it.

Hide behind the door until she gives you the signal to leave, and then head back out. Wait for the guard to leave, then enter the Caliph's bedroom. Go through the eastern-most door, through a secret door, and east some more. Take only your family's treasure and the Vizier's journal.

Next go back to where you met Obdel and talk to the servant. He'll send you to Obdel's quarters, in the south-west block, where you should search the dresser and read the scroll. Head for the city gates and spy on Obdel where you'll see him meeting a mercenary. By listening closely you'll learn all about Obdel's scandalous trickery and the location of al'Katraz. Threaten him when the barbarian has gone and, once he's told all, he'll be killed by an unknown force.

Now you either can go and satisfy your greed at Hajar island (although it doesn't help your quest) or go straight to Katraz island.

*Al'*Katraz

From the well head south, then west. Tell the first guard that you're neither a Razif nor an assassin, and that he should take a close look since you're not a villager but a Corsair! Move off to the south-west corner of the island to chat with the leader of the Ganlats. Tell him who you are and ask why he is feuding. You need to recount your own story and then head over to the Razifs, east of the well.

Follow a similar line in patter with the Razif leader. After telling him your story you'll need to shuttle back over to the Ganlats and then tell their leader to go to the well.

Tell the Razif leader to head to the well too, and go there yourself. After the reconciliation ask about the mercenary and how to get into the prison. One key is in the north-west corner of the island, the other is in the north-east, and each is hidden under flames.

With both keys go to the south-west corner of the island and into the building to the north of the leader's rug. Meditate on the red pillow till you get the word 'Hama'. Repeat the process in the south-east corner of the island and you'll get the word 'Bazan'. If you now approach the well from the south and say the magic words, an entrance to the dungeon will open.

Al'Katraz Dungeon

Head west then south. Kill the man in the large room and continue west, then north. Kill the three guards in the next room and go north. In the room with the four braziers kill some more guards and move north-west into another room full of guards. Going through the spiked-shut door to the west enters the catacombs. From here on you'll meet various monsters, all of which should be put to the sword.

Going through a second spiked-shut door, move the blocks from the northern doorway and then enter the corridor behind. When you find a room with mummies over towards the west, take their treasure and continue north.

Following the passageway round you'll eventually come across a room of statues. Go south, past the blocks, until it turns east. Soon you'll encounter an Ettin – hit it with a Sun Dazzle shard from your sling and stab it in the back until it keels over. Nick his treasure from the chest to the north and return to the room with the four braziers.

Going through the north-eastern door and going north you'll see the barbarian mercenary captain. Introduce yourself to him and then kill him and all his men. Be warned – the only way to kill the captain is to shatter the gem on the table with a magic shard.

There is a tureen in the room to the north. If you look in it you will find a mage reflected in the water. Speak with him and, when he's gone, take the key from under his bed in the north-east corner and return to the room to the south.

Use the mage's key to open the eastern door, then open the middle door to the north. Inside is your brother – you'll find that the evil so-and-so's have stolen his voice and taken it to the island of Aballat. That's where you need to head next, but not until you have freed all the other prisoners.

Aballat Island

Head around the island's shoreline, opening all the bottles you come across – one holds your brother's voice. Then move to the courtyard in the centre of the island. Here there are six doorways with more bottles inside each and some treasure, all guarded.

Now head back to your ship and talk to your brother. He'll summon the family genie, Muliban, and break the spell that bound him to the nameless masters. Ask Muliban whether your beloved Princess Kara is still alive and whether he can help you wipe out the nameless masters. If you ask what the nameless masters hoped to gain from enslaving him, Muliban will tell you all about the Moonstone under Sorcerer's Island. Then say "Let's act!" and set sail for...

Al-Naqqil

From the hallway, pull the levers to the east and west to disarm two traps, then push the levers back in. Head north into a room that bends round to the west, kill the Nas Nas and take the necklace – this is Master Necklace 1.

From there, go into the room to the east. Kill the cyclops and the wizard and take their treasure. Then head north through a doorway with a red and gold vase in front. Kill the cyclops, smash the large green ceramic jar and take the treasure.

Open the two cabinets to the north and read the scrolls. Exit to the north-east and move up the corridor. Proceed until you find corridor leading east. North of the door you come out of is a secret wall – kill the wizard behind it and take Master Necklace 2.

Go west until you find a door leading north. Go through to meet two wizards spoiling for a fight. Finish them off and go to the dresser on the northern wall, reading the scroll inside. Don't read any of the books on the floor, however, because they'll explode.

Exit west and move down the passage. When it turns south, about halfway down the western wall is a secret wall. Go through till you're in a north/south corridor. Go north, killing the wizard that's waiting for you in the corridor. At the end doorway, enter the room and kill the wizard guarding Master Necklace 3. Take that and read the book in the south-east corner.

Through the secret wall to the south, you'll find another secret wall that you need to go through. Eventually you should come to an east/west passage, with the southerly corridor continuing to the east.

Keep going south, and about halfway down you'll discover a secret door to the west. Behind it is a chest of treasure and an energy curtain to the north – passing through the curtain takes you to the platforms.

The Circular *Platforms*

On the north-east side of the first circular platform there is a path that you should follow. This leads to the second platform where you need to smash the orb and kill the cyclops that appears.

Going to the north-east corner another path will appear. Use it to get to a third platform, smash the orb to release an Ogrima that you need to kill, then walk down the south-east path. The path continues south-east to a fourth platform. Smashing the orb here summons a man that you should kill before going down the south-westerly path.

From there take a south-east pathway to the next platform. Smashing the orb reveals a mummy to kill. Return via the north-east path to the circle where you killed the man. From here head south-east to platform six and the Great Ghul. A north-east path leads to platform seven, where you'll find the Moonstone rather than an orb.

To get to the next stage you need to go along a north-west path to a dead-end, then back and along the north-easterly path to another dead-end. When you return to the circle now you can go along a path to the south-east, which leads to the next platform.

Smashing the orb here releases a vicious Ettin. Fight him and when he's dead go north-west, which leads back to the Moonstone room. Go to the north-east dead-end and, as you head back, a branch to the north-east appears. Up there is another circle bearing an orb that, when smashed, frees the captain of your ship. Leaving this circle to the north-east takes you back to the hold of the enchanted ship.

Showdown

Go up on deck and talk to the captain, who'll offer to stay with you as your faithful genie because you freed him. However, the quest isn't quite over. Tell him that you're going back to destroy the nameless masters themselves.

Enter the magical portal in the hold and leave the circle you appear on to the north-west. You'll come to a circle where, when you smash the orb, you will have to fight an Ammut. Go north-west again.

This time, smashing the orb summons your Markeen, or duplicate. Talk to him and then kill him. When he's dead, a nameless master appears – which you should kill.

Head down the south-west path. It isn't complete, and it's only by walking back and forth that it forms, a few blocks at a time. When that fails to work, go back to the Markeen room and travel the lit pathways. This completes the original pathway, which leads to another circle. When you smash the orb a Great Ghul is released. If you kill it, Princess Kara is freed. Hurrah!

Tell her the situation and then go south-west. You'll come to an empty circle – from there go down a new extension to the south-east. This takes you to where the final nameless master awaits. Kill him and you've succeeded in your adventure and proved yourself as a great Corsair.

Muliban will appear, so quiz him about Kara and the others you've rescued. He'll transport you back to Bandar al-Sa'adat, where you'll be made a hero and finally marry the woman you love. Congratulations – you can be all smug for a while now.

cheat Lab

Yes, once again the hallowed doors creak open and the pine-fresh cleanliness of the PC GAMES Cheat Lab wafts gently across these pages. A cheat for Zool 2? Tips for Master of Orion? Step inside, dear reader, step inside. Take your shoes off first, though...

Raptor

Apogee Software

It's fast, it's furious and it's probably the best (and cheapest) scrolly shoot-'em-up available on the PC. Yes, it's Raptor and if you're the impatient type and you want all the weapons right away, why not boost your bank balance with this little hack-ette.

Firstly, load up Raptor and save the game. Now quit back to DOS and, using any popular hex editor, edit the file (normally called **CHAR0000.FIL** or something) and change bytes 24, 25 and 26 so that their values read FF FF FF.

Now simply reload the game and you'll find that the Cheat Fairy has deposited a small fortune in your galactic bank account. So, now you can equip your fighter with everything. Happy blasting.

SUPREME SPIES

Master Of Orion

MicroProse

MicroProse is known for its in-depth strategy games (Civilization, Colonization, Master Of Magic, etc) and Master Of Orion is no exception. So, if you're struggling in your quest to crush your enemies and rule the galaxy, try holding down the ALT key and typing the following: MOOLA on the planets screen to give yourself 100BC; and GALAXY on the main star map to reveal the locations of all the hidden planets and starships. What could be simpler?

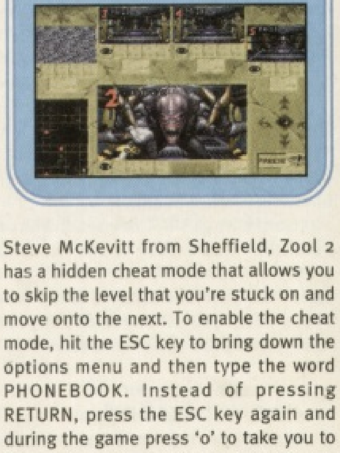
Space Hulk^{CD}

Electronic Arts

Space Hulk isn't the easiest of strategy games and even though your Space Marines are massively armoured, they're as thick as two short planks. Even the best strategy in the world can fall foul of a dumbo Space Marine who just stands in a tunnel, smiles at the approaching Genestealers and completely forgets to fire.

But here at Cheat Lab, craftiness and cunning run rampant, and if you want to cheat in Space Hulk, all you have to do is change the game's batch file. To do this, log onto the Space Hulk directory and edit the HULK.BAT file. Find the line that calls the main game program and add the word CHEAT to the end. Now save the HULK.BAT file and load up the game again.

Okay, at first glance nothing much appears to have changed, but if things start getting a little too frantic on a particular campaign mission, pressing the 'W' key will allow you to win the current battle and move swiftly onto the next one.



Theme Park

Bullfrog

Fantastic game, Theme Park. Absolutely fantastic. But if you're a bit impatient (like me), you'd probably like oodles of hard currency immediately so you can build up a park that will make the Disney Corporation positively green with envy.

So here goes. Start a new game in Theme Park, save it in a free slot and then quit back to DOS. Next, edit the saved game file with a popular hex editor and change the 13th hex position in the first line to FF.

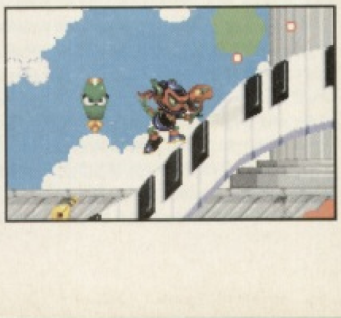
Now load up Theme Park again, select the appropriate saved game and — voila! — your bank balance will be bursting with $16 million. Obviously, if you run out of money at any time during the game, save your position and repeat the above process.

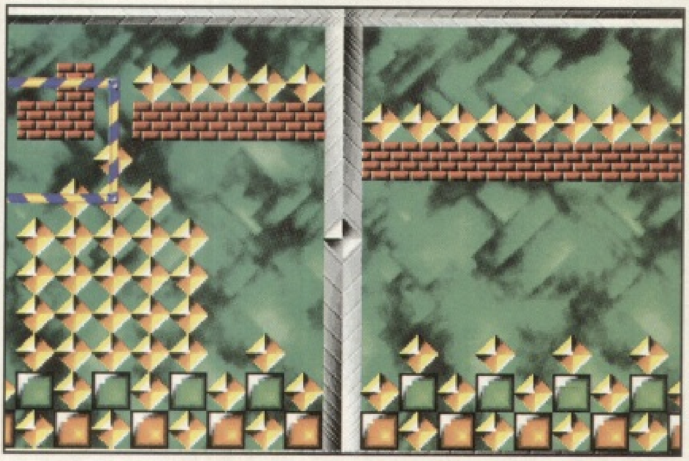
Zool 2

Gremlin Interactive

Being the brightest, fastest platform game around can cause its own particular set of problems. In Gremlin's Zool 2, things happen so fast, you've got to have the reflexes of a console-kid if you're going to leap, jump, bounce, spin, stab and fire your way to the end of the game and a confrontation with the evil genius, Mental Block.

But why worry? According to young Steve McKevitt from Sheffield, Zool 2 has a hidden cheat mode that allows you to skip the level that you're stuck on and move onto the next. To enable the cheat mode, hit the ESC key to bring down the options menu and then type the word PHONEBOOK. Instead of pressing RETURN, press the ESC key again and during the game press 'o' to take you to the next level, '3' to play the bonus stages and the CTRL key to perform a super jump.





Clockwiser

Rasputin Software

Blocks, clocks, and er, probably shocks can all be found lurking in Clockwiser, the fiendishly addictive puzzle game from Rasputin Software. So if you're frustrated by Level 73 or bamboozled by 87, thanks to the very talented Mr P. Kerrison from Lincoln, here are all 100 level codes for your perusal. Take it away Mr K...

02 QWERTYUI
03 HOTSSSSS
04 MONINANU
05 KREZUWEE
06 STALIOPA
07 ZWEETSOK
08 LAARSMIO
09 PORFEDIE
10 DERFGENO
11 IELBEDIE
12 BRABEKIL
13 PLUISJES
14 ATSEWENT
15 CHACHOLI
16 PIROWARF
17 JILSAPOT
18 DRILBILL
19 FLOSEPIL
20 BLUBSALF
21 MEGABYTE
22 YABADABA
23 KRAKAMIK
24 KIKASTIK
25 OKIDOKIH
26 HATSEKIE
51 BLAARZAK
52 KWEENIET
53 WALDRILK
54 CHRIETIT
55 SLISTOPI
56 DRUIPIDO
57 PLOGHOIK
58 GROEZELT
59 REMMELGK
60 KROKKULN
61 ALLEMAFP
62 KIKELSTO
63 PARAZAKS
64 BIBOBATS
65 PEPODROL
66 HATSIKOO
67 PERIDORO
68 ADROPORI
69 RUISLIBS
70 FIDDELEH
71 FOFOFOFO
72 PIELEMOS
73 BIBELEBO
74 BELLEBEE
75 FIDELDOM
27 OSSEFROS
28 GRATGOPL
29 HUIPERTU
30 OLKEPOLK
31 HATSJIEH
32 GRUMPIER
33 AIAKKIJA
34 BRUIMBIE
35 KWEZELTA
36 GRINOLDE
37 RHINBOLD
38 HUIFREZI
39 OEPSADAI
40 PEAHSOUP
41 HASHNIPO
42 AKIRAJAN
43 BEBIBOLK
44 SPRITSOR
45 FLUIMPIE
46 GNEZOLIP
47 PILIPOLT
48 POLKAZAR
49 SNOZALAF
50 PRETOVYT
76 ZWAZZAZZ
77 BRAZMRAZ
78 FLOBBEDO
79 DIDELDEE
80 MALLABOO
81 JITNEFOO
82 SNITNEDO
83 RUDOBORO
84 BOLIBELI
85 REFKELEN
86 ZEBEDEBO
87 BOODJING
88 KRIKEPIK
89 DIDODEDO
90 SCHEBEDO
91 NITNEJOO
92 FITNEDOB
93 LAUMMAUW
94 VUUAAUMK
95 VOELBOEL
96 DUBBELUP
97 DRIBELDI
98 DROLZWAK
99 KWAKSLAB
100 FLABDRAB

cheat lab Interactive

It's that time again. The bit of the page where we throw caution to the wind and go all interactive. So, if you have a gaming problem, if nobody else can help and if you can find them, maybe you should hire... the Cheat Lab.

Dear Cheat Lab,

I've just bought Fury Of The Furries and I've got to Level 4 of the Pyramid World. At the beginning of the level, there are two razor blades that come out of the ground and then you jump over a pit of spikes. When you get across, there is a huge pit of acid that you can't jump over, and you can't have the green furry. Please help!

William Steptoe,
Gloucester.

Ah. Difficult one this and we've absolutely no idea I'm afraid. I've talked to my colleague Matt on The One magazine and he's talked to the programmers, but sadly it appears that there aren't any cheats or maps for the game. So, if anyone out there can lend a helping hand, drop us a line at the Lab.

Dear Cheat Lab,

In the game Innocent Until Caught, how do I get through the invisible laser beams to get the bonds from the bank? I've got the statue and the alien egg and I've given them to the man in the mansion on the hill. I think I've talked to everyone and used everything but with no joy. Please help!

Neil Sykes,
Essex.

Right. To get past the invisible lasers you've got to use the bag of flour in the bank vault. This will reveal where the beams are. If you haven't got the flour, simply pop along to the police station and talk to the desk sergeant about the drugs raid. He will give you the bag of flour you seek.

Dear Cheat Lab,

In The Secret Of Monkey Island, I can't seem to defeat the sword master. I'm great with a sword (if I do say so myself) but she still keeps beating me.

Jerry Jones,
London.

Well Jerry, to beat the sword master you've got to match her insult for insult. It doesn't matter how good you are with a cutlass, all you actually have to do is respond to her insults with a suitable reply. There's no set way to do it — you just employ a little patience and a bit of logic.

Dear Cheat Lab,

In the catacombs in Ultima VIII, I've found a puzzle where three sets of steps go up and down if you stand on some pressure pads. I've tried for ages but I just can't work it out. Please help!

Stephen Donlan,
Stockport.

I guess you must be in the Shrine Of The Ancient Ones and the puzzle you mention can be a bit tricky. But if you number the steps from left to right as 1, 2 and 3, stepping on the pads in the following sequence will reveal the door: 3 1 3, 2 1 2, 3 1 2, 3 2 1, 3 1 3, 2 1 2, 1 3 2, 3 1 2, 3 1 3 and 2 1 2. If you've done this correctly, all three sets of steps will be raised and you will be able to enter the next room through the hidden doorway.

Dear Cheat Lab,

I've having trouble with Simon The Sorcerer. How do I get across the collapsed bridge to the Tower Of Doom? And while I've got your attention, when will Simon The Sorcerer 2 be out?

Peter Mathews,
Salford.

To get across the bridge you've got to use the magic broomstick that belongs to the witch who lives in the ruined cottage. Unfortunately you can only get this when you've become a fully fledged wizard which means finding the legendary staff of Nafflin The Necromancer.

If you haven't done this (your letter was a bit on the short side — we couldn't tell) then you'll have to get the woodworm from the tree, go to Rapunzel's Tower and use the woodworm on the floorboards. Use the ladder to climb down into Nafflin's tomb and, to get the staff, 'move' the loose bandage on the mummy. If none of this helps, write in again and tell us exactly where you're stuck.

As for Simon 2, Adventure Soft plan to release it just after Christmas.

Stuck in an adventure?
Do you know any hot tips for todays top PC games?

If the answer to either of these questions is "Yes" grab a postcard and send your tips or queries to us at: CHEAT LAB, PC GAMES, Emap Images, 30-32 Farringdon Lane, London EC1R 3AU. You never know, you might be lucky enough to win a software prize.

IT'S NOT OUR FAULT!

PC GAMES can not be held responsible for loss of data or for the tips failing to work properly or for anything strange and bizarre that might happen to you and your PC within the next 153 years. You use these tips at your own risk. If anything goes wrong it's your fault. Just wanted to make that bit clear, okay?

DR SPANNER'S CASEBOOK

So you want to get onto the Information Superhighway, eh? Well, if you want to surf the global networks, you're going to need a modem. And a fast one at that. But don't worry — the Doc is here with some friendly advice...

DR SPANNER TECHNICAL EXPERT.
DOCTOR WHO
PC HANDY TIPS
PROPERTY OF GENERAL HOSPITAL

Cyberspace, Here We Come!

Everybody seems to be talking about modems these days, but why? What can one do for you? Well, there's the mundane bit of being able to send files to other like-minded people with modems. Fine. Doesn't really need much explaining that one, does it?

Alternatively... you could use it to dial up a friend and engage in some suitable head-to-head mayhem. A spot of Doom, perhaps, or maybe Formula One Grand Prix. All good, clean fun, of course, but on its own is it worth a couple of hundred big ones for the privilege?

No.

The reason most people are getting into modems right now is, quite simply, the Internet.

The modem is the toll booth at the start of the Information Super Highway, the Little Chef of the Infobahn, the on-ramp to — ta-da — the INTERNET.

But what's so great about the Internet that makes 20 million otherwise perfectly normal (and not socially deviant at all) people insist that typing messages and smiley faces to one another across the globe is a fair substitute for a pint or two down the local?

Software, that's what. Gigabytes of the stuff on every conceivable subject under the sun. Get yourself a modem and you have access to all the latest games demos before they hit the shops (you might save yourself a quid or two on duff games this way), the best shareware and amateur games, games updates and fixes, graphics and music software. Did you know that bulletin boards had the first pictures of the comet impact on Jupiter or that you can now download 30-second demos of the latest Prince album?

Oh, and you also have the opportunity to take part in mammoth multi-player games against opponents from all over the world. With a modem, the world is your oyster...

Choosing A Modem

Okay, so you've decided that a modem is worth having, but what sort do you need? The techno-babble associated with them can be very confusing. V.32bis, MNP5, 14,400bps or V.Fast? What does it all mean? All you really want to do is buy a modem! You just want to be able to plug one end into your PC, the other into the phone socket and be up and running, strutting your cyberspatial stuff straight away. How is any sane person supposed to know what the hell all this V.32bis gibberish is all about? At least V.Fast makes some kind of sense... or does it?

According to Doc Spanner's Casebook, the best thing to do when you're faced with a situation like this is slice a fish in half — cut through the carp, as it were (that's terrible, you're fired — Dave). You really just want to know the minimum modem requirement and how much you can expect to pay for it.

So, to be frank, if you want to buy a good modem, you should ideally plump for a 14,400 bits per second (bps) modem and ignore the rest of the rubbish. Modems operate at varying speeds from the slowest, a pathetic 2,400bps, up through 9,600bps to 14,400bps and the shiny new 28,800bps models. These days, it doesn't matter what people say, anything less than a 14,400bps cyber-box on top of your PC will end up costing you more in phone bills in the long run.

And when you know what you want, you can cut out most of the modem-type jargon that comes with the territory. But just for the record — V.32bis refers to the data transfer rate (in this case, 14,400) and you should also be on the lookout for a modem with V.42bis compression, which means that you spend even less time downloading files and don't rack up those huge phone bills I mentioned earlier.

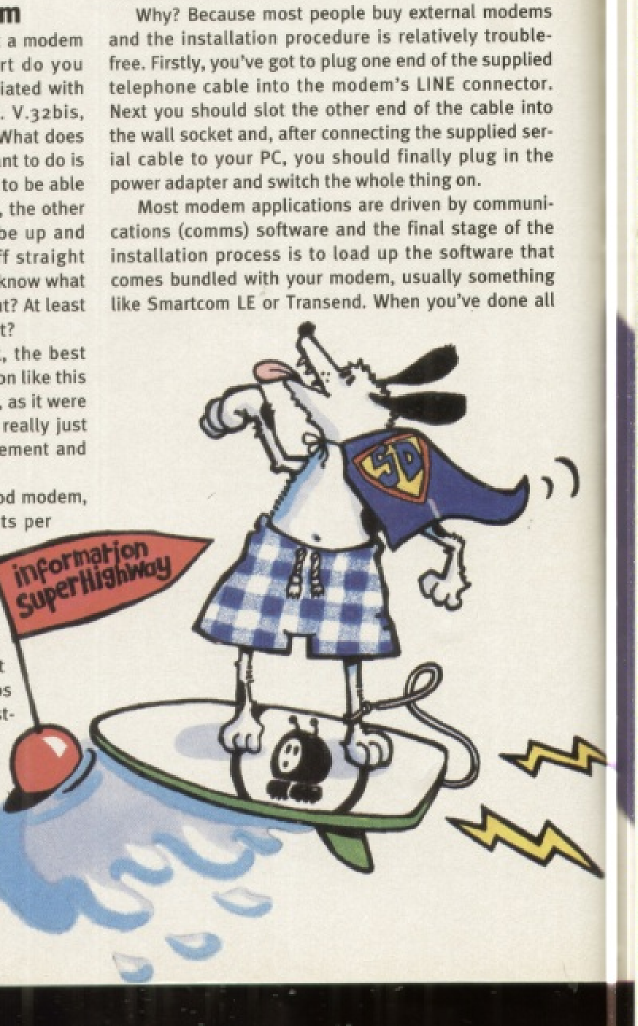
Of course, if you happen to be spankingly rich, then by all means go ahead and get yourself a state-of-the-art 28,800bps (informally called a V.Fast) modem. And I hope you choke on it, too (but only because I can't afford one myself).

Plugging It In

Now normally, this would be an ideal time for the Doctor to grab Dean for the photo shoot and to launch enthusiastically in to the old step-by-step bit. But, of course, there's really no needto do that where modems are concerned.

Why? Because most people buy external modems and the installation procedure is relatively trouble-free. Firstly, you've got to plug one end of the supplied telephone cable into the modem's LINE connector. Next you should slot the other end of the cable into the wall socket and, after connecting the supplied serial cable to your PC, you should finally plug in the power adapter and switch the whole thing on.

Most modem applications are driven by communications (comms) software and the final stage of the installation process is to load up the software that comes bundled with your modem, usually something like Smartcom LE or Transend. When you've done all



this, run the diagnostic checks to see if the damned thing is working.

Yes, it may sound simple and idiot-proof, but I've had more aggro setting up modems than any other type of hardware on the PC. Bar none. So instead of the 'How-to-install-your-modem' bit, here is a selection of the most common problems people have setting up and configuring one.

(1) There's only one phone line — and I need it for the telephone.

No problem. All you need is a simple split connector. You can buy them from any electrical shop, or even from your local market, for about ú3. It does mean you can't use the modem and the phone at the same time, of course.

(2) The modem won't initialise.

Check all the connections, of course, and see if you have any diagnostic software supplied with your modem. Check and see whether the assigned COM port (i.e. COM 2) actually matches with the COM port that you've plugged your modem into. If there are some flashing lights on the modem, this is usually a good sign.

(3) There are no flashing lights!

Ah. If the lights aren't lit, check the power by plugging the modem into another plug socket.

(4) It says 'No dialtone' when I try to dial out.

This may be because you're on an old-fashioned telephone exchange. Look through the software set-up for an option to change between pulse and tone dialling. Otherwise, check the phone socket to see if it actually works.

(5) I get a connection, but it bombs out all the time.

Dirty line? Use error connection? Check you have the parity, stop bits and protocol to match the system you're dialling.

(6) It just bombed out half way through a download!

Always try to download big files using the Z-modem transfer protocol. Even if the connection breaks for some reason, if you log again and restart the download, the modem will continue from the point where it was interrupted, rather than right from the beginning again. The Z-modem option will be in the modem set-up menu.

BABT Approval

Did you know it is legal to sell an unapproved (by BT, that is) modem, but illegal to use it? What the hell do BT and the people who sell these 'illegal' modems expect us to use them for, then? Bookends?

And in case you were wondering, yes, unapproved modems do tend to be cheaper than the approved ones. Funny, that...

Fax Of The Matter

Whether you go for a fax/modem depends on how desperately you want to send and receive faxes, I guess. Oh, make no mistake — fax/modems are clever things, but nine times out of ten they're still a lot more hassle than just sticking a sheet of A4 paper in an ordinary fax machine. If you do want fax capabilities, make sure you get at least a Class 2 fax capability, and that it will send and receive at 9,600bps. Happy faxing.

WOW!!
INFORMATION SUPERHIGHWAY
TECHNICAL ASSISTANT

Dr Spanner *Recommends...*

Andest Roadrunner Rocket, £269

If you want your modem shaped like an ice hockey puck, then this is just the job for you. Small enough to slip into your pocket and cart around, the 14,400bps Roadrunner is a nippy performer. However, the retail price bears no relation to the street price, as we've seen these modems for under £170.

RoadRunner
Rocket

US Robotics Sportster 14,400, £119

A full V.32bis modem with V.42bis compression, the Sportster is a relatively cheap and cheerful fax/modem. It comes with a highly illustrative installation guide and the backing of the huge US Robotics name. A good solid performer.

Sportster
14,400 DATA/FAX MODEM

Zoom 14,400 Fax Modem, £169

Sleek and compact, the Zoom modem also features all the Dr Spanner modem requirements — V.32bis send and V.42bis data compression. Easy to install and to use, the only let-down is the comms package that comes with it. The instructions are a bit thin too, but all in all it's a well-behaved, dependable buy.

ZOOM fax MODEM 14.4X
14,400 bps V.32bis Send/Receive Fax/Data Modem with V.42bis/MNP
WinFax
DosFax
COMit

The name's Erskine. Christina Erskine. And if you've got a technical problem, I've got a not-so- technical solution. That's why they call me...

THE *TROUBLE SHOOTER*

Simon from East Finchley in London is our lost soul this month. **"I'm getting really bogged down by DOS, and all my friends say I should be using Windows because it's so much easier. But it takes up so much space. Is it really worth it?"**

Like so many things in life, Simon, it all depends on what you intend to do with it. Windows won't replace DOS on your PC — it sort of covers it, like an attractive drape over a tattered old sofa. Or something. What Windows does is to hide the crude, text-based nastiness of DOS with a set of icons (the little pictures of files) which you can click on to activate. So instead of typing, say,

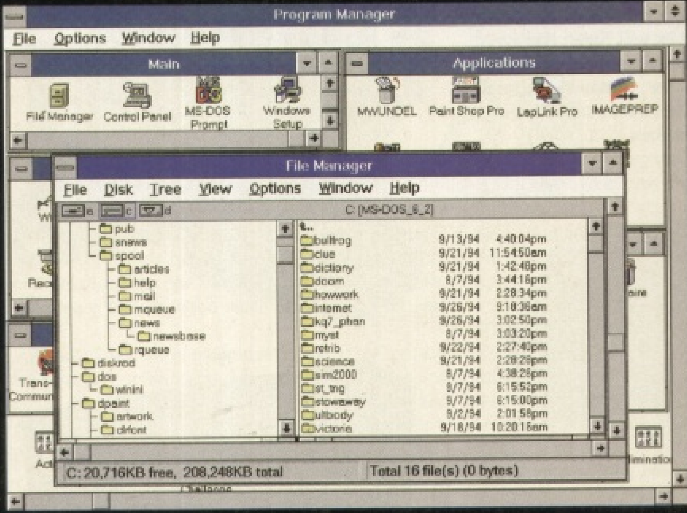
```
CD WORDPRO\ [Enter]
WORD [Enter]
```

to go into your word processor, you look for its icon on the screen, place your mouse cursor over it, and then click the mouse button twice over the top of it to load up the word processor.

Look, I'm may be called Simon but I'm not simple — even I can type CD WORDPRO and all that. It's all the tedious copying and deleting of files when I need to make more space on the hard disk that's a problem.

Windows will certainly help you out with that. It has a File Manager utility (shown above), which has an icon which looks like a filing cabinet (well, a *bit* like a filing cabinet). Once you've double-clicked on the icon, you'll see a map of the files and directories on your hard disk and a menu bar along the top.

By clicking on the menu names you can get at the options for each. In the File menu, for instance, you can copy files, delete them, rename them — and you can also move them, which is something you can't normally do in MS-DOS (instead, you have to laboriously copy the files and then delete the originals, which is intensely dull).



```
bullfrog        9/13/94   4:40:04pm
clue            9/21/94  11:54:50am
dictiony        9/21/94   1:42:48pm
doom             8/7/94   3:44:16pm
howwork         9/21/94   2:28:34pm
internet        9/26/94   9:18:36am
kq7_phan        9/26/94   3:02:50pm
myst             8/7/94   3:03:20pm
retrib          9/22/94   2:27:40pm
science         9/21/94   2:28:28pm
sim2000          8/7/94   4:38:28pm
st_tng           8/7/94   6:15:52pm
stowaway         9/7/94   6:15:00pm
ultbody          8/2/94   2:01:58pm
victoria        9/18/94  10:20:18am
C: 20,716KB free,  208,248KB total     Total 16 file(s) (0 bytes)
```

What about my games?

Hmm, well... it's a bit different with games. You see, not all games run under Windows...

But I thought you said Windows runs with DOS. If Windows runs with DOS, and the games run with DOS, why don't they run with Windows?

Well, let's just say it's a software problem — a memory problem. And some games do. Some games run specifically from Windows and you *need* to load them using their little icon.

Great, which ones?

Erm, there's PGA Tour For Windows, there's Civilization For Windows, there's Microsoft Golf, and the Microsoft Arcade games and after that I get a bit stuck. Some CD-ROM stuff, like The Journeyman Project, Spaceship Warlock and The Worst Game In The World (AKA Plumbers Don't Wear Ties), run under Windows.

And that's all?

Ah, yes, of course, you get Minesweeper and Solitaire free with Windows 3.1. And Hearts comes with Windows 3.11 as well. But these are *little* games, the sort of thing you play to help pass a dull five minutes during your lunch hour, and they're not going to give the likes of Wing Commander 3 any sleepless nights. There really aren't that many mainstream games which *need* to run under Windows. You may find some of your DOS games will run from Windows File Manager — but generally not the newer, more memory-intensive ones. Your PC will just hang up and you'll have to reset.

What's Windows 3.11? Is it better than Windows 3.1? If so, why?

It's pretty much exactly the same, to be honest, but it has built-in networking capabilities. Whoopee! (If you're in to that sort of thing.)

This is all very well and good, but come on, spill the beans, is it actually worth going to the trouble of learning how to use Windows?

I personally think it is. It's simpler to use than DOS, it's a lot easier on the eye and, if you're as lousy a typist as I am, you don't have to keep repeating commands because you make silly little typing errors.

If you have a 386 machine, you'll find DOS is faster to use than Windows and, of course, you'll want to make sure that the software you always use on a regular basis will run with it.

Hang on a moment — isn't there a Windows 4 as well? You lot at PC GAMES did an article on it a month or two ago, didn't you?

There is indeed a Windows 4, except that it's not called that any more. It's called Windows 95 now which, I think, gives you some clue as to when its developer, Microsoft, expects to release it. Now this just might be able to cope with both your disk housekeeping and your games-playing.

How come?

Windows 95 is going to be very different to look at from Windows 3.x and it will hide DOS even better — basically you need never see a C:> prompt. The product isn't available yet, but it is being beta-tested and some games will work with it quite happily. The idea is that Windows 95 should be able to run any PC-compatible program and Microsoft is quite proud of the fact that it can get Doom to work under Windows 95.

So what do you reckon? Do you think I should wait until next year and get that then?

Well, actually, no, I don't. I never think people should wait for any PC product, whether it's hardware or software. You see, things change so quickly that you'll end up waiting forever. Suppose you had saved up for a 386DX, but decided to wait because there would be 486SXs only six months later. By the time you could buy a 486SX, 486DXs were coming down in price and you'd have enough money for that in six month's time. And if this really was you, you'd be waiting for a Pentium by now.

Besides, you never know — if you buy Windows 3.1 now, Microsoft might be offering partial money-back upgrades for Windows 95 next year. They've done that with titles like DOS and Encarta, so they just might with Windows.

Ah — another poor soul released from torment. If you've got a problem with your PC that needs a spot of troubleshooting, drop me a line and we'll talk it through. And when I'm not being the Troubleshooter, I've got a day job as editor of PC REVIEW, sister magazine to the very wonderful PC GAMES. PC REVIEW covers the whole gamut of PC entertainment and includes a Technical Help section, in which you can find more detailed versions of the articles which appear in this section.

ADDICTION WARNING

"After two minutes, I was hooked..the manic nature of Vital Light makes for a very enjoyable game indeed..the gameplay is great. If tricky. And hard"
Amiga Action

"Without doubt one of the most addictive games I've played since Tetris on the Game Boy. Slick presentation, finely tuned gameplay and an unusual twist make this one to watch out for if you like your grey matter to be excercised as much as your trigger finger."
The One

"One of the most infuriatingly addictive games to appear on the Amiga"
CU Amiga

Cover disks on The One and Amiga Action.

Available for £29.99.

VITAL Light

A500 A600 A1200 22 • CD32 22 • PC Windows Oct 13

PURE ADDICTION

MILLENNIUM

NEXT MONTH

The *Best* Christmas Ever!

The next PC GAMES will be our special Christmas issue, so you can be sure we'll be full of festive beer (surely you mean 'cheer' — Dave).

Yes, 'tis (nearly) the season to be jolly, so no doubt we'll be decking the halls with boughs of holly, draping tinsel and paperchains over our PCs (thus creating an almighty fire hazard), spraying fake snow on our monitor screens and generally having a bit of a knees-up.

And in-between the partying, we'll be beavering away to create what will surely be the finest issue of PC GAMES ever. Already we can promise you (snow on the tracks, permitting):

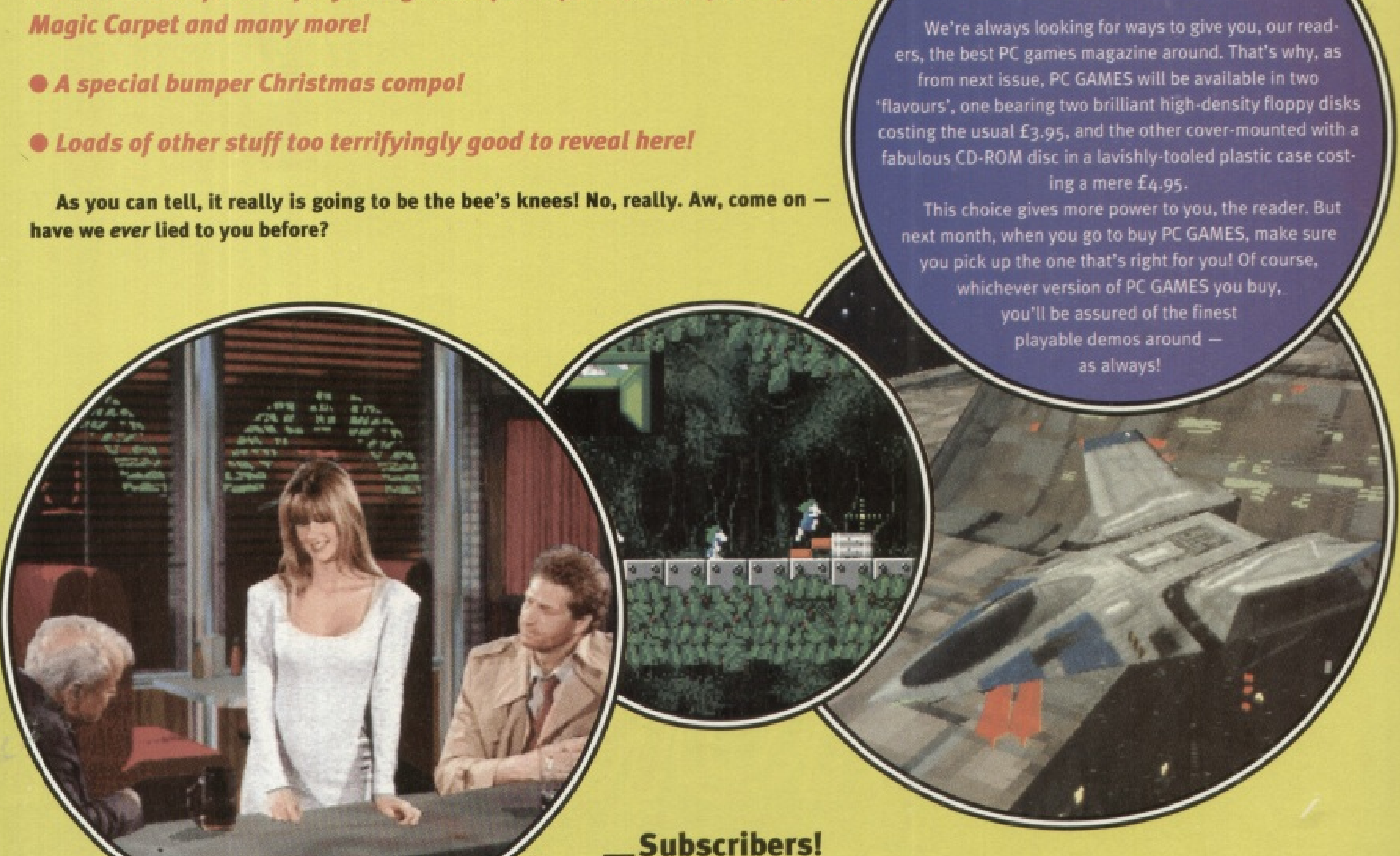
- ***Full reviews of all the big Christmas games, including Under A Killing Moon, Wing Commander 3, Ecstatica, The All-New World Of Lemmings, Retribution, LoadStar, KA-50 Hokum, Wings Of Glory, Dragon Lore, Discworld and... well, too many to list here, basically!***
- ***Previews of ALL the major games coming your way in 1995!***
- ***Extensive tips and player's guides for Inferno, Transport Tycoon, Magic Carpet and many more!***
- ***A special bumper Christmas compo!***
- ***Loads of other stuff too terrifyingly good to reveal here!***

As you can tell, it really is going to be the bee's knees! No, really. Aw, come on — have we *ever* lied to you before?

PC GAMES Splits Shock!

We're always looking for ways to give you, our readers, the best PC games magazine around. That's why, as from next issue, PC GAMES will be available in two 'flavours', one bearing two brilliant high-density floppy disks costing the usual £3.95, and the other cover-mounted with a fabulous CD-ROM disc in a lavishly-tooled plastic case costing a mere £4.95.

This choice gives more power to you, the reader. But next month, when you go to buy PC GAMES, make sure you pick up the one that's right for you! Of course, whichever version of PC GAMES you buy, you'll be assured of the finest playable demos around — as always!



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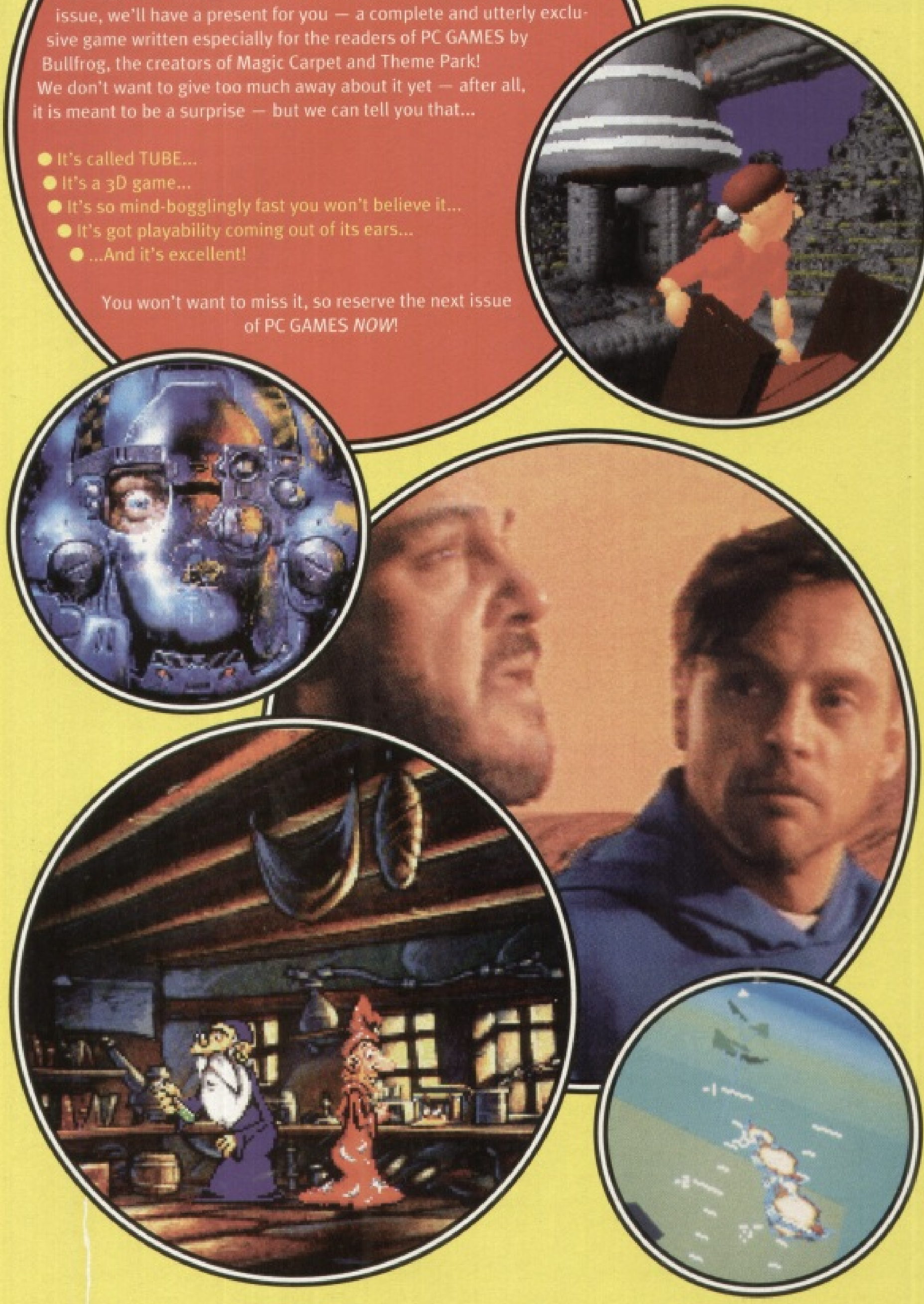
A *Special* Christmas Gift!

Because the next edition of PC GAMES will be the Christmas issue, we'll have a present for you — a complete and utterly exclusive game written especially for the readers of PC GAMES by Bullfrog, the creators of Magic Carpet and Theme Park! We don't want to give too much away about it yet — after all, it is meant to be a surprise — but we can tell you that...

- It's called TUBE...
- It's a 3D game...
- It's so mind-bogglingly fast you won't believe it...
- It's got playability coming out of its ears...
- ...And it's excellent!

You won't want to miss it, so reserve the next issue of PC GAMES *NOW*!



Order *Your* Copy Now!

Picture this scene: You've walked in to your local newsagents in the hope of buying the Christmas issue of PC GAMES, the first choice of dedicated PC gamesplayers everywhere. But horrors! It's not there! After chatting to the nice man behind the counter, you discover that — oh no! — it's sold out.

Desperately you scour all the other newsagents in your area, but it's the same sad story everywhere. Consumed by despair you return home, and in a fit of rage pull down the decorations and set fire to the tree. There will be no Christmas for you this year...

Tragic, eh? And this sad sequence of events could have so easily have been avoided if only you'd ordered your copy of PC GAMES. So why not fill in this coupon and hand it to your newsagent? Remember: No PC GAMES, no Christmas.

PCGAMES

I don't think I could bear to spend Christmas without a copy of PC GAMES to hand, so please reserve a copy for me every month. The next issue comes out on December 1st, 1994, and thereafter on the first Thursday every month.

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I would like it delivered to the address below/reserved for me. (Delete as applicable.)

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PCGAMES

It's what Santa would be putting on his Christmas list.
January issue on-sale December 1st.

Letters

A FULL mailbag is a happy mailbag, so send your letters to Dave, the Ed at: PC GAMES, 30-32 Farringdon Lane, London EC1R 3AU. Alternatively, you can Fax us on: (071) 972-6710 or E-Mail us at PCREVIEW@CIX.COMPULINK.CO.UK. Remember, the best letter wins £50!

Starletter

FRAUD *FEARS!*

£50 Winner!

Dear PC GAMES,

I very much enjoyed your face-to-face interview with Mark Hamill in the last issue, and was very impressed that you managed to get an audience with the great man.

However, after reading all about the blue-screen work that Mark did for Wing Commander 3 and how he was overlaid onto backgrounds that didn't really exist, my ever-suspicious mind started working overtime...

Take a look at the picture on page 21, showing you [i.e. me, i.e. Dave] and Dean talking to Mark... It all looks a bit, well, *odd*... I mean, Dean seems to be staring into the middle distance, looking like he's about to be sick, and Mark seems to be just staring to the right, looking at nobody. And notice the way that you're all so separated from each other. And the photo's background is blue...

What I'm trying to say is that I don't reckon you and Mark were ever in the same room together. I reckon that you just pasted together two photos, one of you and Dean, and one of Mark, to make it *look* like you interviewed him in person.

Come on, own up...

Melanie Gerrard,
Norwich.

Blimey, you *are* suspicious! Actually, I'm quite flattered that you think we've got the brains to come up with such an audacious scam. Nope, we really did meet him, it was great, and Dave Kelsall has got the autographed copy of PC GAMES to prove it. So there.

OH, *I AGREE*

Dear PC GAMES,

At last, Imp has said something that I couldn't agree more with [last issue, "PC Programmers Are Lazy!"].

Like him (her? It?), I too bought a 386 just over a year ago, and at the time was advised by all the so-called 'experts' that it would see me right for at least two or three years. Ha! Obviously they measure time differently in the computer software world, because my 386 effectively became obsolete within about six months.

And the most annoying thing about the whole situation is that there seems no reason for this constant pressure for PC users to upgrade other than that most of the games programmers can't be bothered — or lack the talent — to write good, concise code.

I used to own an Amiga, and games like Wing Commander and Legends Of Valour were shifting stuff on-screen around at a respectable rate using just 1Mb of RAM and a measly 7MHz 68000 CPU. If programmers were able to achieve that on an Amiga, surely we should expect amazing things on PC — even a 'measly' 25MHz 386 with 2Mb of RAM...

Still, as long as us PC gamesplayers continue to meekly accept this situation, it looks like we'll just have to keep forking out the dosh for a new machine. And then another one a year later. And another one the year after than. And then... I think you get the picture.

Well done, Imp, a demon after my own heart — although I still think that he can stick his opinions about Doom up his brimstone-glazed [snip! — Dave].

Michael Farren,
Bradford.

Wing Commander on the Amiga running at a 'respectable rate'? Have you *seen* it? Snail Commander, more like...

HIS OAR — *AGAIN*

Dear PC GAMES,

I seem to have started something of a debate [PC GAMES, Issue 2], so I suppose I had better stick my oar in again. To take Tim Russell's point [in Issue 3] first, sure I play games for fun — I like Doom as much as anyone else — but eventually I am left wanting more. Imagine a world in which the only reading material was 2000AD and only films starring Sly and Arnie were made. Top-notch examples of their genres, but ultimately as satisfying as candyfloss.

The computer has tremendous potential to act as a new medium — as revolutionary as the invention of the printing press, or the motion picture. If a book with perhaps a few hundred kilobytes of data can say something significant to me about my life, while not a CD-ROM based game with 650Mb of data?

Yes, there are good games out there but there is potential for so much more — I despair at the prospect of things like the Computer Sex CD-ROM advertised in the last issue, or of interactive movies with less interaction than a Fighting Fantasy novel.

As for B. M. Sherwood's suggestions [in Issue 3], I haven't yet played Gabriel Knight, and in my opinion the Ultima games are sub-Tolkienesque hack-and-slash puzzles appealing to sad, anoraky D&D fans — if that doesn't stir up some controversy then nothing will!

Neil Hopkins,
Sheffield.

Let that be the end of the 'More sex in games' debate. And please note, I'm sure Neil's final comment was a semi-joke.

TWO-*FACED*

Dear PC GAMES,

Why is it that in Dave Upchurch's review of Zool 2 he stated (and I quote) "being able to play as different characters is a neat touch" and in his review of Heimdall 2 (same issue) he said "having two main characters is a total waste of time"?

Also, why do you pick on Dave Kelsall?

Luke O'Dell,
Huntingdon, Cambs.

The answer to your confusion lies in the very reviews themselves. As I mentioned, in Zool 2 there are different areas to explore in each level depending on which character you choose, thus adding a small 'twist' to the gameplay. In Heimdall 2 it doesn't matter which character you play because you can complete the adventure as either, so it's a redundant feature. Okay?

And why do we pick on Dave Kelsall? Because we can.

3D-*WHOOOAH!*

Dear PC GAMES,

I've got a PC, and very happy I am with it too. However, I'm also interested in all the new 'super consoles' that are coming out, like the 3DO, the Sega Saturn and the Sony Playstation. I recently heard that somebody is planning to release an expansion card for the PC which will let it play 3DO games.

Is this true? And, if so, who's making it and when will it be released? Also, will there be cards that'll let you play Saturn games?

Gary [No surname, apparently],
Guildford, Surrey.

If you're happy with your PC, why on earth would you want a console? Still, it's a free country, and I am happy to confirm that there is indeed a 3DO expansion card in production. It's being made by Creative Labs and should be available before Christmas.

However, no price has yet been set for it, and its price is the key factor — after all, if it's not sufficiently cheap enough, you might as well spend a bit extra and get a 'real' 3DO...

You might also be interested to know that there's an Atari Jaguar card in the pipeline. This is being produced by Sigma Designs (who invented the ReelMagic FMV card) and, again, it should be released soon.

As for emulation cards for the Saturn, well, I wouldn't advise you to hold your breath...

MANUAL FRUSTRATION

Dear PC GAMES,

Where are they? Where are they? I am, of course, referring to the famous MicroProse manuals. Remember the days when buying a MicroProse game meant having it delivered to your house by construction crane? When reading a MicroProse manual required five people: four to support it and one to turn the pages?

Well, the reign of the mighty, majestic MicroProse manuals has come to an end with the release of Colonization. Lurking inside the ordinary MicroProse box is a small, pathetic excuse for a manual which holds a mere fraction of the majesty of its predecessors.

MicroProse games were some of the very few which merited forking out £30 or £40 for: not only did you get a good game, but after reading the manual you felt you could jump into a real fighter plane and take it for a spin.

Another alteration which has been made is to the box itself. Remember the boxes which were so sturdy you could use them as a step to reach the top shelf of the kitchen cupboard? Well, these have been replaced with a thin, black cardboard box which can barely support the weight of the atmosphere around it.

If these errors are not rectified soon then, for me anyway, buying a MicroProse game will never be quite the same again.

Gareth McSorley,
Milngavie, Scotland.

The box and the manual seem fine to us — yes, they're both a bit less 'weighty', but they do their job well enough, don't they?

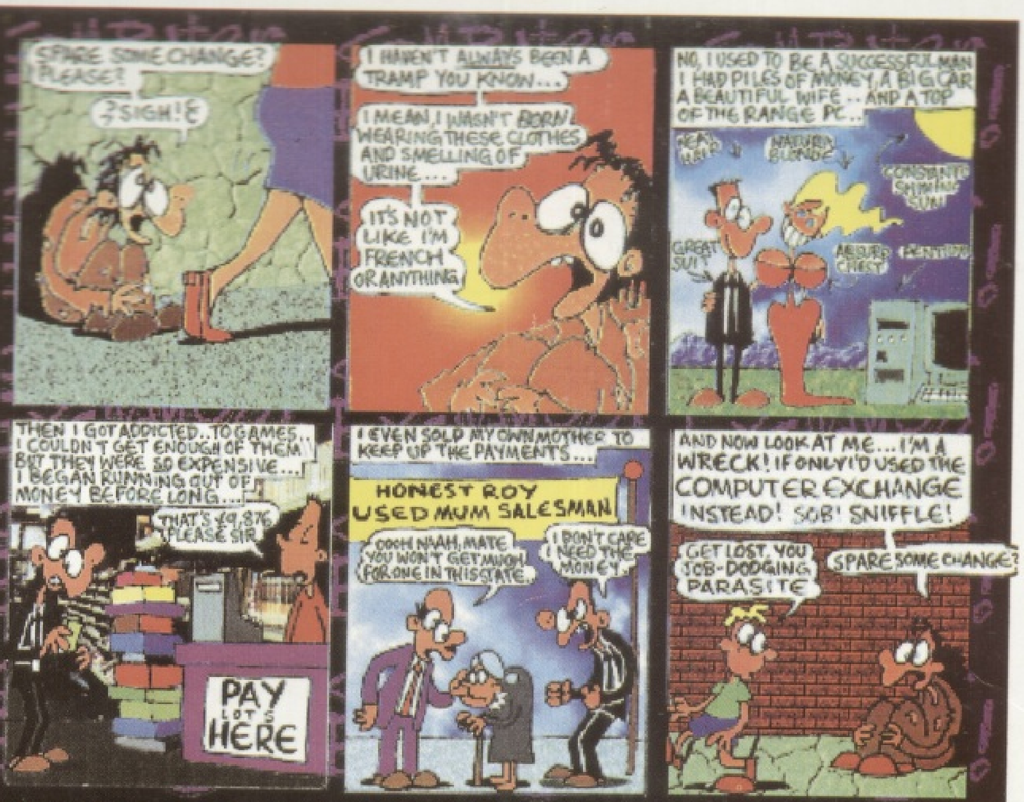
Isn't there something a little more worthwhile you could be getting worked up about? Maybe the council are going to build a road over some nature-rich woodland near your home? Or something. Anything. Please...

Wowzers! Next Month!

WE'VE got so much exciting stuff to tell you about next month's *amazing* Christmas issue, that we couldn't fit it all onto just one page. Turn back to find out more...

Computer Exchange!

Where CHOICE meets VALUE and they both start snogging like drunken teenagers at a party.



SPARE SOME CHANGE? PLEASE?
SIGH!
I HAVEN'T ALWAYS BEEN A TRAMP YOU KNOW...
I MEAN, I WASN'T BORN WEARING THESE CLOTHES AND SMELLING OF URINE...
IT'S NOT LIKE I'M FRENCH OR ANYTHING
NO, I USED TO BE A SUCCESSFUL MAN I HAD PILES OF MONEY, A BIG CAR A BEAUTIFUL WIFE.. AND A TOP OF THE RANGE PC..
REAL HAIR
NATURAL BLONDE
CONSTANTLY SHINING SUN
GREAT SUIT
ABSURD CHEST
PENTIUM
THEN I GOT ADDICTED.. TO GAMES.. I COULDN'T GET ENOUGH OF THEM BUT THEY WERE SO EXPENSIVE... I BEGAN RUNNING OUT OF MONEY BEFORE LONG...
THAT'S £9,876 PLEASE SIR
PAY LOTS HERE
I EVEN SOLD MY OWN MOTHER TO KEEP UP THE PAYMENTS...
HONEST ROY USED MUM SALESMAN
OOOH NAAH, MATE YOU WON'T GET MUCH FOR ONE IN THIS STATE.
I DON'T CARE I NEED THE MONEY
AND NOW LOOK AT ME... I'M A WRECK! IF ONLY I'D USED THE COMPUTER EXCHANGE INSTEAD! SOB! SNIFFLE!
GET LOST, YOU JOB-DODGING PARASITE
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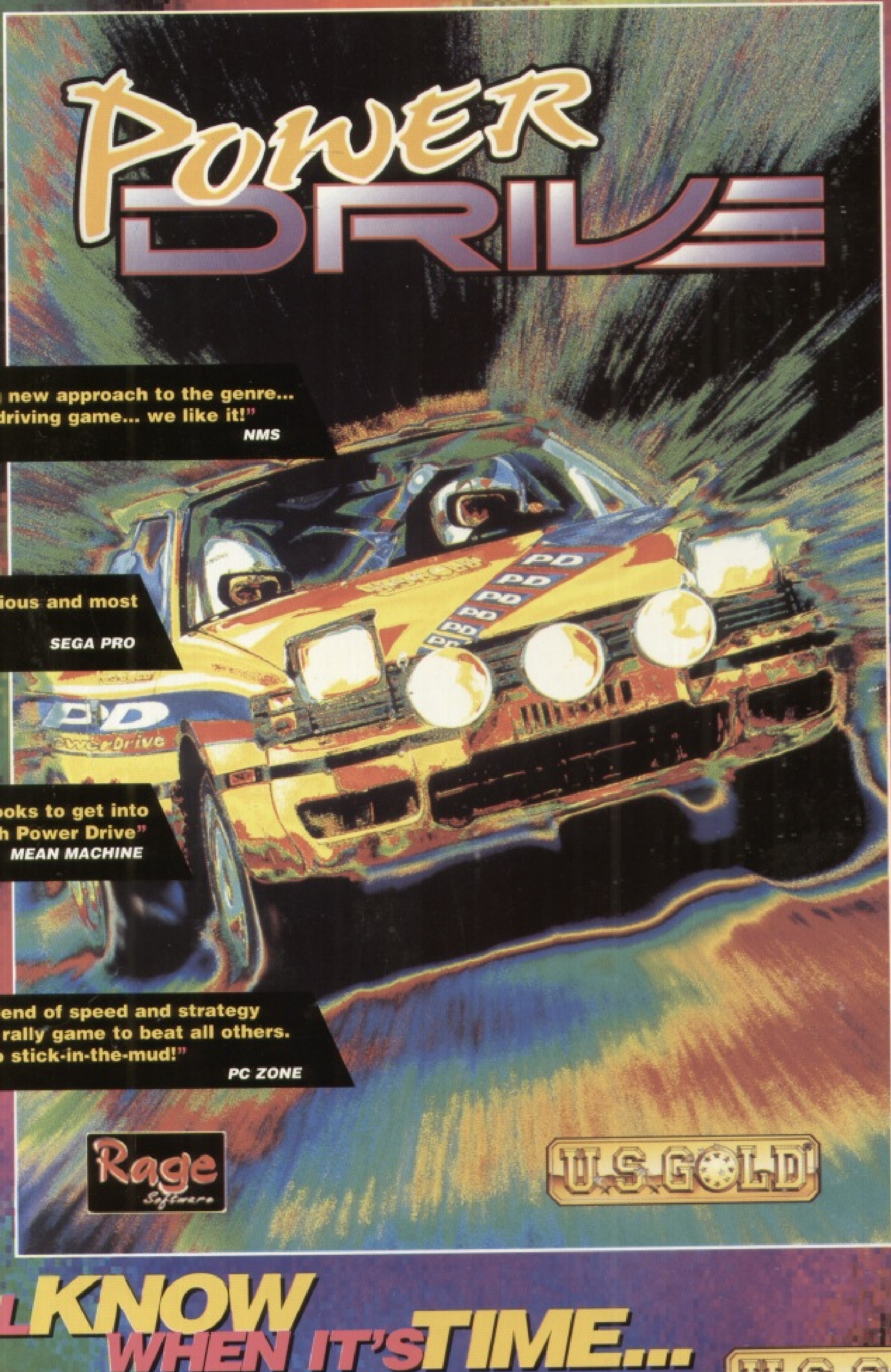

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AMIGA

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MEAN MACHINE

S.NES

“A unique blend of speed and strategy make this a rally game to beat all others. Definitely no stick-in-the-mud!”
PC ZONE

MEGA DRIVE

GAME GEAR

YOU'LL KNOW WHEN IT'S TIME...

U.S. GOLD

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HEN IT'S TIME...

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DECEMBER 1994

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